

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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No. 1574.—VOL. LXI.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 1, 1893.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



BARBARA AND DICK ALWAYS

USED FARMER GROVER'S MEADOW FOR THOSE NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN MEETINGS.

ALISON'S MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE Hiltons were not rich, in fact they were so very much the reverse that it was a great marvel to themselves how they managed to exist at all. There was always a load of debt hovering in the back ground which must be met and grappled with; always a painful tightness as regarded ready money, and an anxious dread of what the post might produce hidden in blue commercial envelopes; and yet, in spite of their cares, they contrived to get a great deal of pleasure out of life.

The children were a happy, light-hearted band, whom it took very little to make cheerful. You might have searched the little country town of Oakhamsted through and through without finding a more united family, until a sudden calamity fell on the little house in the London Road one June day. Mr. Hilton, who had never ailed anything in the twenty years he had lived there, and who had gone out in the afternoon in the best of spirits, was brought home—dead.

No one talked of anything else in the town for three whole days, it was so sudden, so utterly unexpected. The medical authority of the place, Dr. Galpin, promptly called in, declared Mr. Hilton had died of heart disease, that the deceased gentleman had been attended by himself for the last three months, and he had warned him repeatedly to avoid any shock or excitement.

Pressed further by the distracted widow, Dr. Galpin admitted he had known Mr. Hilton to be dangerously ill, and had told him he ought to warn his family of his condition. The deceased gentleman peremptorily forbade the doctor to mention his illness to anyone, declaring that when the summer holidays came and he had time to rest he should be all right, if not he would himself break the truth to his wife.

"It may seem poor comfort to you, Mrs. Hilton," said the old doctor kindly, "but the shock has only hastened the inevitable. I know that, humanly speaking, without it your husband could only have lasted a few months."

Mrs. Hilton looked up in a scared, bewildered manner.

"There was no shock, doctor," she said in a troubled tone. "George seemed as well as

possible at dinner, and he only went into the Reading Room to look at the newspapers. He had not been gone an hour when —"

The poor woman burst into tears, she would have added, "When they brought him home to me dead," only her grief stopped her.

Dr. Galpin looked at her kindly. He was very gentle with those in trouble, but there was something on his mind that must be said before he left her.

"I think," he said quietly, "you have not heard all. There was a shock; Mr. Hilton was reading the *Morning Post* when suddenly, without the least warning, he gave a groan and fell back in his chair. The Rector was present, and saw the whole occurrence. His opinion is that Mr. Hilton read something in the paper which deeply affected him; indeed, he was so convinced of it that he particularly made sure of what Mr. Hilton had been perusing. It was the inner half of the *Morning Post*, where the leading articles are."

The widow shook her head. "George had not a relation in the world. Besides, the 'deaths' are not in that part of the paper. No, Dr. Galpin, it was just heart disease that killed him. He meant it kindly

poor dear, but oh! if he had given me a word of warning."

Dr. Galpin left her and went downstairs. Mrs. Hilton was, truth to say, the one member of the family he did not care for. It was natural she should be overcome by the suddenness of her loss, but the old man did not like the implied reproach to her dead husband. Well, at least, no other voice would blame him, for high and low, rich and poor in Oakhamsted had liked and respected the parish organist.

He had come among them a young man, who had answered the Rector's advertisement in a church paper. He told Mr. Grant frankly he had no testimonials, he had not expected to have to earn his bread, but he had studied under the best professors, English and foreign, and he thought he could give satisfaction. Then, at Mr. Grant's suggestion, they went into the church, and touching the keys as one who loved them, the stranger made the organ "speak" as it had never done before. He was engaged on the spot. Mr. Grant was a rich man, and paid the organist's salary out of his own pocket, so the appointment rested solely with him.

The young Grants, a round half dozen of them, had lessons on the piano from Mr. Hilton, other pupils followed. He played sometimes at concerts in the town and at private parties. Altogether he had earned enough with great care to keep his family, but not enough—as the old doctor felt with a pang—to save a penny. It was to be hoped he had insured his life.

The children sat round the dining-room, where some careful hand had already lowered the blind. Speechless grief was on their faces; it was their first meeting with death in their own home.

Martha, the rough servant, had brought in the tea-tray, but no one had had the heart to eat or drink. It was as though the poor young things were stunned.

"This'll never do," thought Dr. Galpin; and he sat down in Mrs. Hilton's arm-chair—avoiding by kindly tact the one opposite where the organist had been wont to sit—then he took Chubby, the youngest, on his knee, and said, quietly,—

"Alison, I am almost done up. I have been out ever since directly after breakfast. Do you think you could give me a cup of tea?"

The words acted like a magic spell. Alison remembered it was long past tea-time; the children must be thirsty too. So she gathered them round the table, and, thanks to Dr. Galpin, that miserable thing, the first meal after a bereavement, was got over better than could have been expected.

The kind old man looked round at the group, pityingly. Seven girls—not a boy among them—nice girls, and well brought up, no doubt; but what was to become of them.

"My dear," he said to Alison, when they had finished the simple repast. "I must be going, your mother is too upset to come down again to-night. Will you let me speak to you for a moment?"

She led the way into the music-room, which had once been the studio of a photographer, and so was built out from the house, and from some special process applied to its walls, "sound proof."

Alison sank into a chair, the sight of the open piano, which would never be touched by her father's hand again, had quite upset her.

"Alison," said the doctor, gravely, "your father's relations ought to be communicated with. Your mother tells me she knows nothing of his family. Are you sure she is not mistaken?"

"Papa never spoke to me of his family but once," replied the girl. "He told me then that I was very like his mother. I think she was dead."

"And his father?"

"His father died when he was a child, I think." Here the girl's voice broke. "Papa was so good to us because he remembered what his father had been to him."

Dr. Galpin sighed. The chance of finding help for the impoverished family seemed very slight.

"If he had no relations your father might have had intimate friends."

"No one ever came to see him, and he never wrote any letters. I should say that outside Oakhamsted papa knew no one intimately. Mamma has brothers settled in London. I dare say she will write to them."

From the girl's manner Dr. Galpin understood she had no great love for these uncles, and he quite understood the feeling. One of them had been to Oakhamstead once—a stout, florid, middle-aged man, very pompous, and a little uncertain about his h's. By the side of this brother-in-law the organist had looked more delicately refined than ever.

Mr. Grant opened his heart to the doctor that very night.

"I liked Hilton better than any man I ever met," he said, frankly; "but I can't stand his wife. I think I shall advise her to move."

"I wouldn't. For the girls' sake it is better for her to stay here. In Oakhamsted people will know they are a gentleman's children. Settled down in a new place, with Mrs. Hilton for sole guardian they would sink a step."

"Why don't we like her?" asked the Rector. "We've known her as long as Hilton. She was one of the best of wives; and as a mother and domestic manager, Mrs. Grant declares she's wonderful."

The doctor smiled.

"Yet she 'jarred' on us even with poor Hilton to keep her up to the mark. Depend upon it, Rector, she'll jar still more now; but for the girls' sake I hope she'll stay in the place."

"That'll depend on what she has to live on."

When the funeral was over it was found the organist had been more prudent than people imagined. His life was insured for one thousand pounds. It had been done before his marriage, and was settled on Mrs. Hilton; so was the furniture of the eight-roomed house. The widow looked her position in the face and went to Mr. Grant.

"I shall let lodgings," she said, "and the two eldest girls must go out as governesses. If we are very careful we shall get on, and perhaps you would recommend me to your new organist. He might take to the music-room as well."

But Mr. Grant had too much sympathy with the girls. Their mother might be made of sterner stuff, but to Alison and Barbara it would have been well-nigh torture to see another in possession of their father's study, and to hear a stranger playing on his loved piano.

The Rector hastened to recommend as lodger his curate, a kind old bachelor who was changing his rooms, and who would like the little voices of the children, rather than consider them an infliction.

He also told Mrs. Hilton he would try and find situations for her elder daughters, and was as kind and sympathetic to her as though she had not contrived, in the twenty minutes of their interview, to grate on every sensitive instinct he possessed.

Mrs. Hilton walked briskly home, thinking on the way that things were turning out better than she had expected; well invested her thousand pounds would bring in fifty pounds a year; the girls ought to earn between them quite sixty, while Mr. Ball's rent would be as much, making all together the respectable income of a hundred and seventy.

She was not heartless; she had loved her husband fondly, and mourned him very truly, but she was of an intensely practical nature, and to do the best she could for George's children seemed to her more her duty than to sit and fret over his loss.

She was quite young still, hardly forty, and she was not afraid of hard work; and she considered with careful management, she could keep her seven girls respectably without help from anyone, though of course, if either of her prosperous brothers chose to lend a hand, why so much the better.

"And the girls mun't be too proud to see which side their bread is buttered," her reflections concluded; "poor dear George gave them terribly high notions I'm afraid, but its high time they found out they can't afford to set up for fashionable ladies."

She had been born in a rank far below her husband's. George Hilton had given up very much for the sake of her pretty face; she loved him and made him happy. It was only when the children began to grow up, and he found his wife's ideas as to their future widely different from his own that he realized he had not sacrificed himself alone.

Alison herself opened the door to her mother, a tall, slender girl with beautiful grey eyes just tinged with blue, a wealth of soft chestnut hair, and features so classic in their regularity that her father once said her face would have delighted a sculptor.

Mrs. Hilton had not much opinion of Alison's looks, she thought her too pale and grave, also she and this eldest daughter of hers were not in perfect sympathy.

Alison was as proud—her mother declared—as an empress, and far too exclusive to please the bustling, sociable little woman, who was utterly unable to understand a girl's preferring solitude to the acquaintance of those beneath her in birth and breeding.

"I am so glad you have come in, mamma," said Alison in a relieved tone. "Mr. Chapman and Uncle Jabez are in the parlour; they came some minutes ago, and are in a great hurry."

Mr. Hilton was not at all perturbed; Mr. Chapman was her husband's lawyer, and Jabez Tucker her eldest brother, what more natural than they should come together to consult as to the investment of her thousand pounds?

"You can go back to the children," she said to Alison, "and tell Martha to lay the table in the dining-room, your uncle will have some lunch before he goes back to town."

Alison gave the message to the servant, and had turned in the direction of the nursery, when she met a pretty dark-eyed girl just a year her junior, who threw an arm round her fondly, and asked—

"Have you escaped at last, Queenie, how did you manage it?"

"Mother has come in, and she sent me up to the children."

"The children are in the garden picking peas. Nancy is looking after them, come in here, Alison, I want to talk to you."

"Barbara, what is the matter? Your cheeks are positively burning."

"Alison, I hate Mr. Chapman, and I am quite sure that he and uncle Jabez came here to be disagreeable."

Alison stated.

"Father left Uncle Jabez executor to his will because he was such a good man of business, and Mr. Chapman is getting the money from the insurance, so I dare say they had to come."

"Alison, don't you detest Mr. Chapman? his father was a dear old man, but James was always odious; don't you remember when we were tiny children we used to be afraid to pass him because he threw stones at us?"

"He must be thirty now, and he has left off throwing stones for a good many years, Bab; we are not likely to see much of him when all this business is settled."

"Hem!"

"What do you mean, Bab?"

"Oh, Queenie, I ought to have been the eldest, for you are years younger than me in worldly wisdom. I don't believe you have the faintest idea why we are likely to see a great deal more of James Chapman now than we have ever done before."

Alison shook her head.

"I don't understand in the least what you mean."

"Well, I think I'll tell you," said Barbara, slowly. She was a little bit of a creature, with glorious black eyes and hair the colour of ebony. Her features could not compare with Alison's, but she had a brilliant complexion, a charming smile, and altogether would have appeared to many people far more attractive than her elder sister. "I think I'll tell you," she went on, looking intently at Alison, "because forewarned is forearmed. James Chapman means to marry you."

"Nonsense!"

The perfect frankness of the reply, the utter



incredulity it expressed, annoyed Bab, whose temper was hot and uncertain.

"Oh, very well, if you won't believe me, don't. James Chapman came here so often in the last three months that father said it was quite an infliction. He waylays us coming out of church that he may walk home with you, and when he isn't near enough to talk to you, he sits and stares at you as though you were a picture exhibited on purpose for his edification."

"I hope you are mistaken, Bab," but there was less confidence in Alison's voice now, and a shadow had crept into her clear eyes. "You know the Chapmans think so much of money and we have always been poor."

"James is head of the firm now, and can afford to please himself," retorted Barbara, "besides, men are so much in love sometimes as to forget money, only understand this, Queenie, if you marry that horrible man I will never forgive you as long as I live."

"Don't be afraid, Bab, I shall never marry. We are not likely to be sought by anyone dad would have called a gentleman, and I couldn't bear a husband who was common or vulgar, or—"

"Or like Uncle Jabez," concluded Bab, whose thoughts moved faster than her sister's. "Well, I'm glad to hear it; but, for goodness sake, Alison, don't let mother hear you say so. Uncle Jabez is on the pinnacle of her highest regard just now. I wonder what mischief he is plotting in the parlour; and oh! I do wish, Queenie, he wasn't executor to father's will and our guardian, you know it gives him a sort of power over us all."

Alison shivered in the June sunshine.

"Perhaps if he is as rich as mother says, he won't want to have much to do with his poor relations."

"Rich people love to patronise their less fortunate kindred, and to give them plenty of that most unpalatable fare—good advice. Hark, what's that?"

Well, might she inquire. Never in all the years they had lived in Rose Cottage, had the parlour bell been pealed in that violent manner. The two girls stood perfectly still clinging to each other, hardly knowing whether to answer the summons or not. In what seemed to them barely a moment, the little servant came up with a solemn face.

"Your mother wants you both at once, please, miss, and I think there's something awful the matter, for she could hardly get the words out."

Hand in hand the two sisters entered the parlour. Evidently Martha had not been mistaken, something was the matter. Uncle Jabez, sleek, prosperous, and condescending, sat at the little round table twirling his hat, an occupation which seemed to require all his attention. Opposite was Mr. Chapman, grave, collected and serious. Mrs. Hilton stood between them with a white, angry face, her bonnet awry, and her widow's mantle unfastened, as though some excitement was suffocating her.

"You must compose yourself, Susan," said her brother, pompously, "I assure you these little oversights happen every day."

"Every day," repeated Mrs. Hilton, bitterly. "I'll not believe it. A man's folly and prostration don't ruin his wife and children every day, or it would be a more wretched world than it is by a long way. I've warned George a score of times not to put things off. And now you see what his folly has brought me to."

She stopped abruptly in her passionate harangue, for there, looking at her with sad, reproachful eyes, stood the dead man's children, Alison and Barbara.

## CHAPTER II.

THE sisters said nothing. It really seemed as though their mother's frantic outburst had terrified them. They stood perfectly still hand in hand, only Alison's beautiful eyes looked inquiringly at their uncle as though to ask an explanation of the scene.

It was the lawyer who gave it.

"Sit down, young ladies," he said, quietly. "Mrs. Hilton wished you to hear the truth from us. It is a most regrettable circumstance but one unavoidable. The premium on your father's insurance policy fell due on the twentieth day of May, and not having been paid the policy lapsed, and your mother, instead of receiving a thousand pounds will not have a penny."

Barbara, by far the more business like of the two sisters, said gravely.

"I always understood there was a month's grace in paying the premium. I have heard my father say so."

"Precisely; thirty days is the precise time, and there is no doubt Mr. Hilton intended to pay the money before the nineteenth of June, when all would have been well. He died, as you know, upon the fifteenth. It is an open question whether the company would have accepted the premium had it been sent by your mother within the allotted time. I incline to think not, but the point makes no difference, for it never was sent; and when Mr. Tucker and myself applied to the secretary yesterday we received the information that the policy had lapsed, and no money would be forthcoming."

Alison found her voice. What hurt her far more than the loss of money was the blame cast on her father by the wife he had so loved; but she kept back every undutiful word as she said eagerly to her mother,—

"It is very terrible, mamma; but you have us left. Barbara and I will work for you and the little ones."

Mrs. Hilton refused to be comforted.

"We might have managed with the thousand pounds, but even then it would have been a struggle. Now, I suppose, we shall starve. I haven't even enough money to pay for the funeral and our mourning."

"The latter, considering your circumstances, was a needless luxury, Susan," said Uncle Jabez pompously; "poor people should deny themselves the trappings of woe if they can't pay for them."

Oh, how the two girls hated him for this remark!

Mrs. Hilton had grown calmer now. She knew the worst, and sat with a worn, subdued look on her face. She glanced at her brother in a nervous, apprehensive way, as though she feared to offend him.

"How many children have you?" demanded Uncle Jabez, much as a relieving officer might have asked the question of an applicant for parochial relief.

"Seven," said Mrs. Hilton humbly; "but the two eldest will be able to keep themselves."

"Seven!"

Mr. Tucker threw up his hands as though overwhelmed by the answer.

"Why do poor people have such large families—and not a boy amongst them?"

It was quite true the seven were all girls, so Mrs. Hilton could not deny it.

"If you had had a boy I might have taken him into the business," said Uncle Jabez generously. "I might manage with one of the girls. I'll consult my partner when I get back to London."

"Please don't trouble," said Barbara quickly.

"Alison and I have made up our minds to be daily governesses, and then we can help mother with the children."

"Perhaps you think you're too grand to stand behind my counter," said Jabez sharply; "but you'll please to remember beggars mustn't be choosers. But I don't think you'd suit me or my customers either—you're too stuck up."

Mr. Chapman came to the rescue.

"I don't think the young ladies would be strong enough to assist in your business, sir; they are neither of them very robust, and as they have been very highly educated teaching seems their best resource."

"Oh, very well," said Mr. Tucker huffily; "if one of the biggest ham and beef shops in the Borough isn't good enough for 'em they can take their chance. I shan't go down on my knees to 'em to let me keep 'em."

He was gone almost before they realized his intention.

Mrs. Hilton looked more miserable than ever,

but the lawyer came to the girls' help in an unexpected manner by setting to work himself to cheer her.

"Don't despair, Mrs. Hilton," he said kindly; "your husband was very highly thought of here, and I don't doubt his widow and children will find some way of earning an income. Meanwhile, if there's any need of ready money, I can easily get you a loan of fifty, or even a hundred pounds. You can give me a bill of sale on the furniture, and then you'll feel under no obligation to anyone."

"Alison," said Barbara that night as they were preparing for bed, "have we been mistaken in James Chapman all along? Is he really a friend in need?"

Alison shivered.

"I feel frightened of him," she said gravely. "Bab, to-day when you warned me I laughed, but now, somehow, I feel I'd almost rather serve in Uncle Tucker's shop than owe anything to Mr. Chapman. He looked at me all the time he was talking to mother, and his eyes seemed to burn my face."

"Some people would say he had fine eyes," replied Bab; "but they always remind me of Mephistopheles. I said so once right to Dick Carew."

Mr. Carew was a nephew of the Rector's, and James Chapman's articulated clerk. An orphan with fair prospects but very small present means, he had taken lessons of Mr. Hilton in the hope of getting the post of organist at a village near Oakhampted. He had known Alison and Barbara all their lives, and was on intimate terms with the whole family at Rose Cottage.

"I suppose Mr. Carew likes him," said Alison gravely, "or he would not have been articled to him."

"He was articled to old Mr. Chapman, and only transferred to the son. No; he doesn't like James any better than we do. He says he is a very clever lawyer, and he has never known him to do an unfair thing; but he can't trust him."

"Dick is very young," said Alison; "but I think he's a good judge of character."

"Very." And Bab looked demurely on the ground. "Do you know, Queenie, his time will be up in another year?"

She paused; but something in her voice had aroused Alison's attention. She looked scorchingly at Barbara's blushing, downcast face.

"Is that it, Bab? Do you really like him?"

"Something more than like," whispered Bab; "only we are not going to say a word to mother or anyone till Dick is out of his articles. Queenie, darling, don't think me heartless to make plans when we have lost dad—but you know he liked Dick."

"I know," said Alison, holding Bab's hand closely, as though she feared to lose her, "Dick was one of his greatest favourites."

"Dick came up the night before the funeral," went on Barbara. "He brought that cross of white lilies, and Martha made him come into the parlour, and somehow, Queenie, when he began to talk of dad I broke down and burst out crying; and then, before I knew anything, I had promised—to wait for Dick. Oh, Queenie, do tell me I'm not heartless."

"Not heartless, dear," and Alison kissed her. "You won't forget father sooner for having some one to love; but, oh, my darling, I shall miss you so terribly. You are all I have left, Bab."

"But you won't lose me for ages and ages," said Bab coaxingly, "for Dick has to make his way, and I couldn't leave home till Nancy is old enough to earn something. It will be a secret for a long time yet, only, Queenie, I wanted you to know."

Bab was soon asleep, wrapped in the healthy, dreamless slumber of which even grief cannot for long deprive the young. She forgot all troubles, and looked the picture of innocent girlhood.

But to Alison, at her side, no such repose came. On the contrary, she felt terribly wide awake, and all the circumstances of the day passed through her mind with painful distinctness.

She was not alarmed at having offended Uncle Jabez. She was young enough rather to enjoy his fit of temper; but she was frightened to think that, by accepting Mr. Chapman's offer,

her mother would place them all, to a certain extent, in his power. Mrs. Hilton was a good manager, and hated debt; but if she borrowed a large sum of money, how could she, in her present straightened circumstances, pay it off?

The first chance she had of speaking to her mother alone, Alison represented this, and begged her not to agree to James Chapman's proposal.

"I hope I am old enough to manage my affairs without your advice," said Mrs. Hilton angrily. "You have been ruined by your poor father. Yesterday you offended my brother, and lost us the allowance he might have made me. You and Barbara have such high and mighty ideas there's no bearing you. Mr. Chapman is a gentleman, and if he is kind enough to give me his help, I am sure I shall take it."

"But if you lose the furniture," persisted Alison, "how are we to live?"

"I shall not lose it. The instalments will be regularly met; and, as Mr. Chapman explained, the bill of sale is only a matter of form."

"Mother, dear," entreated Alison, "please don't give it him. Let us make any sacrifice rather than be in his power."

"You speak too late," said the widow sharply. "This morning, when I was out, I called at Mr. Chapman's office and received the money. He had the agreement all ready drawn up, and I signed it. You need not look at me like that, Alison. The furniture is my own, and I have a perfect right to do as I see fit."

Barbara and Alison could only hide their fears. Poor girls! Life without their father was very dreary work. Dr. Galpin and Mr. Grant showed them every kindness, but, apart from the extra stings of poverty, the little family had lost a nameless something since the organist's death.

Mrs. Hilton chose her own acquaintances now, and they were in a grade a little below the friends her husband had made and valued.

Mr. Ball, the curate, told his Rector frankly the best thing for the two elder girls would be to leave home.

"They are not too happy there," said the kind-hearted man, "and Mrs. Hilton is doing her best to drag them down. She's an excellent landlady, and I've no fault to find. She's a good mother to the little ones, but Barbara and Alison seem to have offended her in some way, and it hurts me to see how little account they are made of in the house."

The Rector looked uncomfortable.

"I can't do anything, I fear. I can't bear Mrs. Hilton, and I'm not a favourite with her. I promised to try and find situations for the two girls, but, you see, no one in the place seems to want a governess just now, and she won't let them leave home."

"I can't make it out," said the curate. "I know they have nothing but my rent (five-and-twenty shillings a week), but they seem to have no privations; and I know they are not in debt, for on a Tuesday I often see Mrs. Hilton in the High Street with a pile of tradespeople's books under her arm. It's three months turned since her husband died, so, if he had saved a few pounds, they must be gone by now; and, you know, the insurance company wouldn't pay her sixpence."

"Perhaps her relations help her," said the Rector, who was a good, unsuspicious man.

It was late September, but the first month of autumn was so warm and fine that it seemed like summer still; and Barbara Hilton, with a shawl twisted round her head and shoulders, was walking in a meadow which ran parallel with the gardens of the houses in the London Road.

The evenings drew in so now that it was quite dusk, and the very sharpest of eyes could not have recognized at a distance either of the two promenaders—the two, for Barbara was not alone. It was very wrong, dreadfully improper, of course; but Barbara and her lover utilized Farmer Grover's meadow for their meetings, these were like angels' visits—few and far between.

But the dark-eyed fairy could not have borne her troubles so bravely but for the hope and patience she gained in those talks with Dick, for young Carew was one of those rare beings who

have the knack of always looking on the bright side, a gift he tried to impart to his fiancée.

He was a tall, longheaded young fellow of twenty three, with straw-coloured hair and pale blue eyes, but a heart as true and loyal as ever beat. His worldly wealth consisted of the interest of three thousand pounds, paid to him by trustees till he reached the age of twenty-five when the principal would be at his disposal.

Dick intended to buy a partnership with part, and settle the rest on his wife, for he assured Bab that when once his twenty-fifth birthday had passed, there would be no need for longer waiting.

"I shall never be able to leave Alison," the girl protested, "mother seems almost to hate her sometimes, and I know she would be miserable at home without me, and you see—she has not got a Dick."

Dick smiled.

"She will have before long; Alison is the most beautiful girl in the town, she won't be left unwooed, in fact I could tell you of one person now who is hopelessly in love with her."

"Meaning James Chapman."

"Meaning my worthy employer. I don't like the fellow, Bab, but one must give him his due, and he is desperately fond of Alison."

"But she detests him."

"Does she? it's rather a pity."

"But," indignantly, "James Chapman is perfectly horrid."

"I don't like him myself, but I know no harm of him, and a woman he loved would be able to do anything with him. I'm sorry Alison can't fancy him."

"I shall quarrel with you, Dick, if you talk like that. Queenie is heaps too good for James Chapman."

"Does your mother think so?" asked Dick, gravely.

"What do you mean?"

"I don't want to frighten you, Bab, but have you any idea how often Mrs. Hilton comes to the office to see Mr. Chapman?"

"She borrowed some money of him," said Bab frankly; "it was to be paid in instalments, perhaps she goes to take them."

Dick hesitated.

"Speak out," said the girl, sharply. "Oh, Dick! you don't know what a change Dad's death has made in everything. Nothing you could tell me of mother would surprise me now."

"It's not so dreadful, dear; if you and Alison were not so proud, it need not hurt you. Mrs. Hilton comes to the office about money, but her errand is to receive it, not to repay a loan."

"Dick!"

"Bab, don't speak like that; I would not hurt you for the world, perhaps your uncle has sent his sister some money to be paid through Mr. Chapman, I can't explain it, I can only tell you the bare facts. Your mother comes regularly once a week, and she always takes away two pounds; the cheques are often sent out into the clerks' office to be cashed."

Barbara clung a little closer to his arm.

"Help me to understand it, Dick," she pleaded, "my brain seems turning round."

"I can't, unless Chapman has engaged Mrs. Hilton to plead his cause with Alison, and the money is her reward."

Barbara said good-night soon after this, and went through the wicket gate into the garden of Rose Cottage, and through the back door into the house. She did not want to meet her mother just then, so she crept up quietly to the room she shared with Alison.

All was in darkness; Bab lighted a candle, and leisurely unwound the shawl she had twisted round her neck and face. Not till she was ready to go down stairs did she notice a silent, bowed figure kneeling by the bed.

"Queenie," she cried, putting one hand on her sister's shoulder, "my darling, what is the matter?"

No answer came, but Barbara tried again. With gentle force she raised her sister, placed her in a low chair, and then with her strong young arms round her she repeated her question.

"Surely you can trust me, dear, don't keep me in suspense, but tell me what is troubling you."

"I cannot, oh I cannot, it is too dreadful!"

"You are frightening me sadly," cried Barbara; "my darling, only trust me and we will set our heads to work to cure your trouble."

"There is no cure," said Alison in despairing accents; "clever as you are, Bab, you cannot find one, but oh, be kind to me, Bab, for my heart feels broken."

"Don't cry any more," replied Barbara, in an odd, strained sort of voice, "it is something about James Chapman."

(To be continued.)

## MERRY MEG RALSTON.

### CHAPTER LV.

CAPTAIN CHEVALIER from his ambush had seen all that had transpired, and amazement this time caused him to hold back and to watch curiously the proceedings from beginning to end. He heard the girl's muttered words that something must be done to save Stephen Maitland's life while yet there was time, and he saw her place the paper before Lina, who lay so still and white on the couch, in a comatose state, thrust the pen in her limp fingers, and guide the inanimate hand, slowly but surely across the page.

He was just about to spring into the apartment and tear the paper from Meg's hands, when he saw her fall lifeless by the couch.

This was the opportunity he was waiting for. Quickly he flung the portières aside and sprang into the apartment. It was but the work of a moment to secure the document for which poor Meg would have perilled her very life, and to thrust it in his vest-pocket. Then, without an instant's loss of time, he caught up the inanimate form of Meg, and throwing a dark, heavy shawl about her, he shot hurriedly out of the room and down the corridor, making for the drawing-room, whose long French windows opened on the porch.

He had scarcely crossed the threshold ere he heard the sound of hurrying footsteps.

"Ha! they heard the sound of her fall," he muttered, dashing open the window and springing through it with his burden, landing knee-deep in the white, soft snowdrift.

It took but a moment more to gain the road, and then he well knew the dark waving pines would screen him from sight of anyone who might attempt to pursue him.

As he stopped to take breath for a moment, he glanced back at the mansion, and saw lights moving to and fro in the upper windows.

Dashing breathlessly onward, he threaded his way up one deserted street and down another, dodging into hall-ways if he saw a lone pedestrian quite a distance off approaching, remaining there until their footsteps had passed and died away.

To add to his annoyance, Meg began to show signs of returning consciousness.

"This will never do at this crisis of affairs," he cried to himself.

He had come well equipped for the emergency, and drawing a small vial from an inner pocket, he dashed half of its contents over the shawl which enveloped the girl's head. The pungent odours soon quieted Meg's struggles.

Hailing a passing cab, he soon deposited his burden therein, jumping in himself after giving instructions to the driver to make all possible haste.

They were jostled along the road with lightning-like rapidity, and half an hour afterward had made the distance, and the cab drew up in the loneliest part of the wharf.

"Here we are sir," he said, springing down from his box and opening the door.

The gentleman within did not respond.

"Here we are, sir," he repeated.

Still there was no answer. He thrust in his hand and shook Chevalier a trifle roughly.

"What is the matter with the man?" he muttered, striking a match and thrusting it into the strange customer's face.



He drew back with a great cry. The man's face was as white as death, and at that instant he became aware of the strong odour of chloroform, which filled the vehicle to suffocation.

"Here's a pretty go," muttered the cabman, "and in my cab too. It does seem to me that if anybody is up to any crime, by chance or the devil's own luck, they are sure to single out my cab, to get me mixed up in it. The very demon of witches seem to have taken possession of it. The day I got it a wheel came off and dashed the vehicle sideways, striking a woman, and killing her instantly."

"A month later two politicians, returning from a meeting, got into a heated dispute, and one pitched the other bodily from the flying cab, and he was maimed for life."

"Only a month ago a madman leaped into it as it stood by the curbstone in front of the Town Hall, and murdered himself in cold blood before the very eyes of the pedestrians; while last week a young student missed his footing in stepping out of it, and one of the wheels passed over his ankle, and the consequence is he was obliged to have it amputated."

"It was numbered thirteen, and it was counted so unlucky a cab, that they thought of revoking my license, and they said the next time an accident happened the police would investigate it."

"It wouldn't do to report this case of chloroforming business, for there would be a devil of a row, and they might confiscate my turnout altogether."

"The best way to do," he concluded, "would be to dash a cup of water over him and restore him to consciousness."

Suiting the action to the word, the cabman, without more ado, hurried to a watering-trough a few feet distant.

Snatching up one of the tin cups which was fastened to it by a chain, he soon wrrenched it free. But before he had advanced a single step with its contents, a great cry of horror broke from his lips. The horses, feeling for one moment of time that the restraining hands upon the reins were missing, dashed suddenly forward and were galloping madly down the same street which they had so lately traversed.

It was all useless to run after them, crying at the top of his voice, "Whoa!" they only galloped the faster, and as usual there were no policemen about to aid him, and they were soon lost to sight.

He reported his loss to the nearest station, not daring to mention the serious condition of the occupants of the cab. But up to noon the following day not even a trace of the vehicle could be discovered.

The worst part of it was, his companions—the other cabmen—chaffed him, declaring that they believed no such accident had ever transpired, that he had disposed of it, and had the money snugly hidden away in his pocket, and wanted to call attention to himself by his sensational story, which he had most cleverly manufactured.

The more he protested, the more he was laughed at.

Even the police believed this, and took little pains to search for the mythical runaway.

Three days had elapsed, and yet no trace of the cab could be found. In vain he sought out the newspaper reporters, begging them to aid him by circulating accounts of it in the papers.

They, too, laughed at him, declaring that they had heard of it before.

They advised him, if he was so very anxious to trace it, and his story was not a myth, to offer a handsome reward for its return, and that, ten to one, he would be able to lay his hands on it within a few hours after.

They refused point-blank to trust him, however. He was in such great trouble himself that he paid little heed to the matters of moment that were transpiring about him in the great city.

He did not see the long columns devoted to the account of the sudden disappearance of young and beautiful Meg Ralston from her home.

Old Mrs. Maitland was fairly paralysed over the disappearance of little Meg, whom she had learned to love as a daughter. She would not

believe that she had left the house of her own accord—wandered away from it.

"There has been foul play here," she cried. And immediately old Thomas, the servant, said to himself—

"It all comes from the stranger who was loitering about the place about a week ago," and he made up his mind to do a little detective work on his own account. If he is in the city I will find him," he muttered. "I will tramp night and day up and down the streets until I meet him. Then I will openly accuse him of abducting poor, pretty Miss Meg."

He went to his old mistress and asked for a leave of absence for a few days. Mrs. Maitland shook her head mournfully.

"I should not think you would want to leave me when you see me in all this trouble, Thomas," she said. "You should stand by me, though every one else fails me. Only this morning the butler gave notice that he intended to leave here on the morrow, and he, like yourself, has been with me for years."

"I am not surprised to hear that, ma'am," returned Thomas, laconically, "for ever since that fatal night in the library the butler has had a very horror of the place. He's as tender-hearted as a little child, ma'am, the butler is. Why, he takes Master Stephen's trials to heart terribly. He walks the floor night and day, muttering excitedly, 'Heaven save poor Master Stephen!'"

CHAPTER LVI.

ALTHOUGH every precaution was taken to keep the news of Meg's disappearance from Stephen, the knowledge soon reached him.

"Did I not have enough to bear before," he murmured, "that this new weight of woe has fallen upon me?"

It had been but a few brief days since that terrible event had happened, and yet they had told greatly upon him.

He had lost that gay, debonair appearance, and looked woefully careworn.

He had hoped and prayed, as man had never prayed before, that Lina would live and take back her dreadful charge against him, thereby establishing his entire innocence before the world.

He never meant to see Meg Ralston again.

If Lina lived, and he was set free, he would take her away and live out his weary life with her in some place where they knew him not.

But sorrow, even as pitiful as he had passed through, rarely travels singly.

On the heels of the news of Meg's disappearance came the startling information to him that Lina's death had followed a few hours later, and she had died with those words left unsaid that would have meant so much to him.

He had wearied Heaven with his prayers, and they had been unanswered, and now despondency, deep and desperate, settled over him. He said to himself that Meg must have believed him guilty, and had fled to cut loose from all the shame and disgrace.

This was the hardest blow of all to bear up under.

He would not advise his mother to make search for her; if she wished to hide herself away from them, they must respect her desire.

From that moment he lost all interest in his future.

What did it matter how soon death came to him?

If it had not been for his mother, he would have ended it then and there.

He smiled sadly to himself as he noticed that they put on extra guards to watch his every movement, lest he should commit suicide.

In his sorrow he was thankful that at least one person besides his mother seemed to believe so utterly in his innocence—and that was the butler.

He came to see him daily and wept over him, muttering strangely incoherent words, declaring over and over again that he must be proved innocent, though the Heavens fell.

"As near as I can see, it will end in a prison cell for life or the gallows," said Stephen, gulping

down a dry sob. "Never was a man in this world placed in such a pitiful position as I find myself. I swear to you that I am innocent, but everything is against me. It is one thing to know that I am guiltless, yet quite another to prove it to the censorious world. I have no evidence save my own poor word."

"But you mustn't hang—you sha'n't hang!" cried the butler, excitedly. "I will —"

The sentence was never finished. He sat back, trembling in every limb, in his seat, his face ashy white, his features working convulsively.

At last the butler came no more to see him, and Stephen heard that he, too, had suddenly disappeared.

"It does not matter though they all desert me," said Stephen sadly, to himself.

It touched his heart deeply to see how his poor old mother clung to him in his great misfortune.

He was still her boy—her darling—her only son, and nothing on this earth could ever convince her that he could be guilty of the charge laid at his door.

She fully believed that something would transpire to save him even at the last moment.

Her faith was something marvellous. She grieved from the depths of her heart for Meg's untimely disappearance. But every other thought seemed to merge into one great end: that some day he would be restored to her—proved innocent before all the world.

Thus matters stood, and every hour the day of the trial grew nearer and nearer.

The friends whom Stephen had known in the days of his prosperity forgot him in his adversity.

There was only one prophecy as to how it would all end: he would be obliged to pay the penalty of Lina's terrible accusation.

The day of the trial dawned clear and bright, without one cloud in the blue azure sky to mar the perfect day. It was a morn dark enough in the history of Stephen Maitland, as he paced up and down the narrow limits of his lonely cell, looking through the grating on the gay, bright world outside.

It did not matter much to him if he left it, he told himself.

Suddenly there was the sound of a key turning in the lock, and, glancing up, he beheld the old butler standing before him.

He greeted the old servant with a wistful smile, and for a moment neither could speak, so great was their emotion.

"I have been a long way off, Master Stephen," he said huskily; "but I couldn't stay away when I thought how near it was to—the time."

"Thank you for your devotion," said Stephen, gratefully. "I am glad you came to see me; and, whatever betides," he continued, huskily, "I hope you will think none the worse of me. Believe that I am innocent; and, dear friend, if the time should ever come when you could clear my stained name from the awful cloud which darkens it, I pray you promise me that you will do it. I can never rest in my grave until this horrible mystery has been cleared."

The old butler trembled like a leaf.

"I shall haunt the scene of the terrible tragedy and —"

A great shriek burst from the butler's white lips, and he fell to the floor in a terrible spasm.

The attendant pacing back and forth in the corridor without hastily removed him. They spoke of it with pity—how devoted he was to his young master.

At noon the case was called, and the greatest excitement prevailed from one end of the town to the other, for there were few men as popular there as Stephen Maitland. The spacious room was crowded to overflowing. There was a great flutter of excitement when the handsome prisoner was led into the court-room. Those who had known him from childhood were touched with the deepest pity for him. They could not believe him guilty.

In that hour quite as exciting an event was taking place in another part of the great city.

To explain it we must go back, dear reader, to the thrilling runaway that took place a few days before, when Meg Ralston, powerless to aid

herself, lay back among the cushions of the coach, all unconscious that the mad horses were whirling her on to death and destruction. They careered wildly around first one corner and then another, making straight for the river.

At one of the crossings a man stood, his head bent on his breast, and his eyes looking wistfully toward the dark water beyond.

"If I had the courage," he muttered, "I would drown myself. I cannot rest night or day with this load on my mind. It almost seems to me that I am going mad! How terrible to me is the thought that I—whom all the world has always regarded as an honest man—am an unconfessed murderer!"

The very air seemed to repeat his words—"a murderer!"—and the old butler—for it was he—shuddered, as he muttered half aloud,—

"I never meant to do it, Heaven knows! How was I to know it was a woman, struggling with Master Stephen, at that hour of the night, for I had admitted no one? It was to save him I did it, and it has come out all wrong. How horrible it was that she should have accused him! I—I cannot understand it, but—, Oh, Heaven help me, I dare not confess all, lest they should accuse me—say, and hang me for it! When I was born, someone said: 'He is born under an unlucky star!' I laughed at the words all my life; but, ah, Heaven, how true they were! I was born to be hung, as sure as the sun shines. I am a coward—a coward! Life is sweet, even to the meanest wretch. Ay, that is true—too true! It is horrible—the thought that he must go to the gallows. Yet better he than me! Life is as valuable to the poor man as to the rich. But, oh, if I could save him, without implicating myself! But, no, no; that cannot be. I see no way out of it."

Suddenly the sound of wheels smote his startled ear.

"A runaway!" he cried.

Without an instant's hesitation he threw himself forward. What mattered it if he lost his life in the attempt? He would save the occupants of the carriage, or give his wretched life in the attempt.

## CHAPTER LVII.

NEARER, nearer came the mad, galloping horses, and just as he was about to throw himself forward and seize them by the bits, they collided with the street lamp. In an instant of time the vehicle was smashed into a thousand pieces.

One of the occupants, a woman, was hurried headlong to the pavement; her companion, half in and half out of the coach, was caught in the jam of the door, while his coat was fairly torn from his body, the papers that had been in his breast pocket strewing the street. The butler sprang forward to seize the man and save him, but fate willed it otherwise.

He was too late. And as he stood there paralyzed with horror, the team plunged from the dock down, down into the dark waves.

In an instant only a few white bubbles remained to mark the spot where horses, vehicle, and the unfortunate man had gone down.

The butler, who had witnessed all the terrible catastrophe, turned his immediate attention to the poor creature whom he believed must be dead, she lay so white and still, face downward, in the snowdrift. It took but a moment to raise her, then a mighty cry broke from his lips.

"Heavens! it is Miss Ralston!"

He gathered her up quickly in his arms, together with a few papers that lay under his feet, and carried her to his own lodgings, which were but a few yards distant. For a moment he forgot his own brooding sorrow in wondering what she was doing out there and at that lonely hour. He meant to convey her, as soon as it was fairly light and the family would be up, back to the house.

In the meantime, he would do his best towards restoring her. After pouring a glass of brandy down her throat, he sought to bring back warmth to the ice cold hands by rubbing them vigorously; but it seemed all useless, useless.

Wrapping her in warm blankets, he drew the

settle upon which he had placed her closer to the coal fire, and waited to see if the warmth would not soon revive her.

Then his eyes fell upon the papers he had picked up, and he told himself that he must put them on the table where he would be sure to see them, so that he might give them to her.

One of them lay slightly open, and by chance his eyes lighted upon the contents.

He glanced carelessly at the first line.

What was there about it that caught and held his gaze spell-bound.

The second and third he scanned. Then, clutching it closely, his hands trembling like aspen leaves, he read on and on until the last word was reached.

"It is the confession of Stephen Maitland's wife that he did not do the deed of which she accused him. No one must ever see this!" he cried, with the strange cunning of a maniac. "I will burn this confession, and no one will ever know of it."

Cautiously he made his way to the glowing fire.

What was that strange, sharp, rustling sound? He glanced fearfully over his shoulder. Meg was sitting upon the settle, gazing at him with terror-distended eyes.

For an instant the girl was bewildered at her strange surroundings, then she recognised the butler who had left the house a few days before.

What was she doing here in his presence?

The last thing she remembered was standing over unconscious Lina, and guiding her hand to write the words that would save Stephen Maitland's life.

As she looked she saw that same confession in the butler's hands.

What was he doing with it? How came he by it?

As she gazed she saw him carefully approach the grate, and hold the paper over the flames.

Did he intend to destroy it?

Great Heaven! it must not be.

With one bound Meg had reached his side and torn it from his grasp, just as the flames had caught at it.

"What would you do?" she screamed.

He looked at her with cunning eyes.

"How came you by this?" he cried, in an awful voice, as he struggled with her desperately to gain the paper.

No word answered him.

"You shall not have it!" he cried, wrenching it from her by main force. "You shall not show this up to the world until it is too late to affect Stephen Maitland."

A cry of agony burst from Meg's death-white lips.

She saw, in her terror, that the old butler had lost his reason, and yet withal he was so cunning.

She pleaded with him on her knees, but it was useless. He muttered over and over again that she should not have the paper, that he would keep her there a prisoner until all was over.

Despite her entreaties, to her great horror the man kept his word, and Meg found herself a prisoner in the isolated place.

She was too weak to make any effort to escape; there was none to hear her faint cries.

It must be said for the man that he tended her as faithfully as a woman might have done; but he was deaf to her pitiful, desperate appeal.

He taunted her from day to day with the knowledge that it would be but one day more to Stephen Maitland's trial. At last the terrible time dawned. It seemed to her that she would go mad with the horror of it.

She tried with all her weak strength to break the firm old locks that held her a prisoner there, but it was useless, useless.

The sun slowly climbed the heavens, and she knew what was to happen to Stephen Maitland within those hours.

She sunk on her knees, crying out that if she could not aid the man she loved, that the same sun would set upon her lifeless form—she would kill herself.

Hardly had this resolve become a fixed purpose

with her ere she became conscious of a loud knock at the door.

"I—I am a prisoner here!" she cried. "I beg you, whoever you are, break the lock of the door!"

This was hastily complied with, and she saw standing before her two officers of the law.

"Oh, sirs!" she gasped, falling on her knees before them. "Take me to Stephen Maitland at once, or it will be too late to save him!"

"We are here for that very purpose," answered one of them. "We know all. Mrs. Maitland's late butler has just breathed his last, and confessed all—that it was he who committed the murder, and just how it happened, begging us to come after you, and to liberate you at once, and tell you that Stephen Maitland is now free. A carriage is in waiting. Come at once. Mrs. Maitland awaits you there," he adding, noting how stunned the girl looked, as though she could hardly believe what she heard.

There was one thing that Meg never quite fully understood: how she reached the lonely cottage of the old butler. She believed his mind must have been wandering when he gave such a singular account of a runaway, and a gentleman being with her in the cab. She firmly insisted that the butler must have chloroformed her, abducted her, and brought her to that place, in the hope that she would then be powerless to aid Stephen Maitland.

Who could describe the meeting between Stephen and Meg and Mrs. Maitland which occurred an hour later?

Stephen would have taken the girl he loved so madly in his arms on sight and covered her face with kisses, but she held him off at arm's length, though she longed to rest in his strong arms and weep on the broad bosom she knew beat for her alone.

"No, you must not touch me, Stephen," she whispered. "It would not seem right so—soon after—after poor Lina's untimely death."

"Forgive me—pardon me, Meg," he answered brokenly. "For the moment I had—forgotten, my love for you was so great!"

Here Mrs. Maitland quickly interposed.

"Meg is quite right, my boy," she said. "You must not mention one word of love to her for many a day yet. Perhaps your trouble will be over before many months."

"If you both think that, it will not do for me to remain beneath this roof where Meg is," he declared, huskily. "I am only human, you know, and we both love each other so."

Thus it was that it was arranged that it was best for him to go away, travel abroad, and return a year from that day to claim Meg. But it was with many misgivings that Stephen tore himself away.

"If anything comes of this enforced separation, always remember that I pleaded hard against it, but in the end yielded to your wishes."

On the morrow Stephen left for the Continent.

During the months that followed, Meg lived quietly with Stephen's mother. Only one incident happened to break the monotony of the girl's life.

One day, shortly after Stephen's departure, Meg received a strange packet by mail. On opening it she found a letter, a bit of faded violet ribbon, and an excellent crayon portrait of herself.

The letter was from a stranger, informing her of the death of a handsome young artist named Philip Keston, in a foreign country, and the last words on his lips were her name and the prayer that the mementoes, which he had carried round the world with him in his breast pocket, should be sent her, with the knowledge that he had never, forgotten her. The picture he had drawn from memory and had prized it above all his earthly treasure.

Poor fellow! it would have made death easier to bear for him could he have known how Meg wept for him and his hopeless love for herself.

The year of probation had not yet waned, when, one lovely April morning, while Meg was walking through the grounds that surrounded the mansion, she espied a bearded stranger standing at the gate, leaning on it with folded arms, evidently lost in admiration of the early blossoming buds and half-blown roses.



In the kindness of her heart she approached him.

"Permit me to gather you some of the roses you seem to be admiring so much, sir," she said, courteously:

"Pardon me, would you permit me to enter and gather for myself the one I care for most?" The request was an odd one, but she granted it with a smile.

He swung open the heavy gate, and in an instant was by her side, folding her in his arms, and kissing her with all his soul on his lips.

"Am I changed so that Love cannot recognize me?" he cried.

"Steve—oh, Steve! is it you—really you?" sobbed Meg, laughing and crying all in a breath.

And there Mrs. Maitland found them an hour later, planning for the marriage, which Stephen declared should be solemnized before the sun set. This time he had his own way, and when the stars came out, they shone on sweet little Meg, a bride; and surely the sweetest and most adorable one that ever a young husband worshipped.

And here we will leave them, dear reader, for when a girl marries, all the ills of life should be left behind her, and she should dwell in sunshine and love ever after.

THE END.

## BERTHA'S REVENGE.

—301—

"Oh, dear," said Bertha Carlton, "how I wish I had been there!"

Bertha and Dora were sitting, tailor-fashion, in their two little white beds in the two opposite corners of the room. The clock downstairs had just struck eleven—the cloudy moonlight irradiated the room with spectral effects.

"It was just splendid," declared Dora.

"I never have any luck," sighed Bertha. "Hush! Don't speak so loud or father will be calling up the stairs, 'Children, stop talking and go to sleep.' But the footlights—were there real footlights?"

"Yes, and a stage, and scenery of beautiful painted oak-trees, and a drop curtain. Oh, I tell you the Hamiltons are rich people and don't grudge expense. Why, Florence has a maid all of her own."

"A maid! What for?" asked Bertha, hugging her knees tighter than ever.

"Why, to wait upon her, and brush her hair, and sew lace flounces on her gowns, and all that sort of thing."

"Humph!" scornfully cried Bertha. "As if one couldn't do that for one's self."

"Oh, but we're not millionaire's daughters, you know. Well, anyhow, it seems I got there just in time," chattered on Dora. "Maud Trevor's father had had a paralytic stroke or something, and she had been obliged to go away, and there was no one to do the bride, and by chance Florence's white satin ball-gown just fitted me, and they sent to a florist for a wreath of real orange flowers and ten yards of white tulle for a veil."

"O-o-h!" repeated eager Bertha, as her mind took in the greatness of the situation. "Oh, why couldn't it have been me?"

"Pooh!" said Dora, "as if you could ever act in private theatricals? Why, I was three hours shut up by myself with tea and sandwiches before I could learn my part."

"I could have done that."

"Don't be a goose!" said Dora, tartly. "You a bride, indeed! A homely little thing like you, as brown as a berry, with a regular pug of a nose, to go on the stage for Mr. Mayhew to call his wife!"

Bertha's eyes blazed in the moonlight, the colour rose angrily to her berry-brown cheeks.

"Did he call you that, Dot?"

"Of course he did!"

"Before all the people?"

"Why, to be sure! Why shouldn't he? It was in the play. He takes me into the ball-room where the waltzers were, and the prettiest

floral decorations you ever saw, and waves his hand, and introduces me as his wife."

"He does, does he?"

"Don't I say yes?"

"Ah-h-h!" breathed Bertha, rocking herself back and forth: "now I am glad I wasn't there, pug nose or no pug nose. Do you know, Dora Carlton, that you are married to that man?"

"What?"

Dora gave one spring out of bed, and stood there in the spectral shine like a tall, slim ghost, confronting her sister.

"I was reading to Charlie last week," declared Bertha, "out of his big law book, and it was declared by Chief Justice Somebody or other that, according to the laws of Scotland that sort of thing constituted marriage. Yes, those were the very words; and they oughtn't to have allowed any such nonsense. But you're married to Mr. Mayhew, good and tight!"

"Nonsense!" gasped Dora, "Why, I never saw him before in all my life!"

"Perhaps not," retorted Bertha, fairly gloating over the situation; "but that doesn't alter Chief Justice Somebody-or-other's opinion. You're married, all the same, if Mr. Mayhew chooses to assert his claims—and I really think some one ought to write to poor dear Gus Fairleigh."

And, chuckling to herself, Bertha Carlton sank comfortably back among her pillows and went to sleep, feeling herself fully avenged.

Not so her sister. Early the next morning she made some excuse for returning to the city, and hurried at once to Miss Hamilton's to confide her doubts and terrors to the ear of that faithful friend.

"Ridiculous!" cried Florence.

"But it's law!" protested Dora.

Miss Hamilton opened the door of an adjoining room.

"Don, come in here and set Miss Carlton's mind at rest," said she.

Mr. Mayhew, who was the centre of a group of gay young people, rose and joined them at once.

"My fair bride of last week," he said, bowing low to Dora with a smile.

"Oh, don't!" cried that damsel, wringing her hands; and then an explanation followed.

Mr. Mayhew's surprise at this misapprehension of things was followed by some annoyance at Dora's evident fear and terror of him.

"Miss Carlton need not distress herself," said he, with some spirit. "I am as little anxious for such a *dénouement* as she herself can be."

"You relinquish all rights!" cried she, breathlessly; "before Miss Hamilton as a witness?"

"I don't know that I've any to relinquish," said he, coldly. "But, such as they are, pray, consider them null and void."

Dora glanced up, met his eye fixed on her, with an expression which it was hard to interpret.

"Does he dislike me or despise me?" she asked herself. "But he is handsome! Now, Bertha can't write to Gus Fairleigh. There'll be nothing to tell him."

When she reached home, however, she found a letter from that young gentleman, explaining, in a four-syllabled fashion, that he had changed his mind about marriage. That he intended to devote himself to the interests of the great world at large, instead of one young woman in particular, and had just joined a society whose first law was celibacy.

"I am glad of it!" cried Dora, hysterically. "I never was so tired of anybody in my life as I am of Gus Fairleigh!"

In the midst of her tears and tribulations, Charlie, the law-student, came in.

"Why, sis," said he, "what's the matter?" and an explanation ensued. "Did Bertha make you believe that nonsense?" said he. "What a malicious little gypsy it is, to be sure!"

"Well," sputtered Bertha "she called me brown-skinned! And she said my nose was a pug. And I never supposed she would really believe it, you know."

Dora looked from one to the other, wildly wringing her hands.

"Oh," she gasped, "what will Mr. Mayhew think!"

"Yes," composedly observed Bertha; "you have made a fool of yourself in good earnest. It

almost as bad to be a fool, isn't it, as to have a brown complexion and a pug nose?"

"I shall never see him again, that's one comfort," sighed poor Dora.

But when Miss Carlton made this assertion she did not realize the odd evolutions sometimes accomplished by Fortune's wheel. And the very last person in the world that she expected to meet in Switzerland the next summer was Donald Mayhew.

"Why, it is Miss Carlton!" said he.

Dora blushed all over; she hurriedly dashed away the tears she had been secretly shedding in the dreary little reception-room of the Hotel.

"Are you here with a party?" he asked; and then Dora had to confess that she was officiating as companion to probably the crossdest old woman in the world, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world that she should confide all the family griefs and troubles to him. Out there he seemed like such an old friend to the friendless girl.

"But I supposed you were engaged?" he said; and then Dora told him about Gus Fairleigh joining a Brotherhood, and taking vows and wearing a uniform.

"And my sister is teaching," sighed she, "and mother is dead, and poor father lives with his half-brothers, and—oh, there's Mrs. Wick calling, and she never can bear to be kept waiting."

And away flew Dora light as a thistle-down.

But Mr. Mayhew's arrival at the Hotel signified something like rest and relief to the poor overworked girl. His aunt was an old friend of the terrible Mrs. Wick, and while the two sat nodding their frizzled heads and point-lace capstrings at each other on the piazza, Donald and Dora would stroll out on the shores of the lake, or climb the breezy hill-tops, until one fateful day.

"You are really going away to-morrow?" Dot cried. "Oh, what is to become of me?"

"I am not vain enough to suppose you will miss me," said Don, reaching up to a rocky crevice to gather a spray of maiden-hair.

"Oh, but I shall!" wailed Dora. "How can I help it? Oh, you have been so good to me!"

She turned her face quickly away, but not so quickly but that he saw the sparkle of a tear on her eyelashes. He advanced a single step and took her hands in his.

"Dot," said he, "a year ago I renounced all pretensions to your hand and heart. At your own desire, as you will remember."

She coloured redder than any carnation.

"Oh, Mr. Mayhew, if I could blot that out of the past," she faltered.

"Will you give me back my promise, Dora?" She looked at him with wide, startled eyes.

"Do you mean —"

"I mean, dearest, that I love you," he said tenderly. "That I want you to be my wife. Not in private theatricals this time, but in real earnest!"

And they had a quiet wedding up among the snow-mantled peaks of the mountains; and when Donald Mayhew returned to Scotland he took his wife with him.

"Didn't I tell you you'd be obliged to marry him?" wrote mischievous Bertha. "But, you see, I didn't know quite how persistent he was."

THE latest use to which paper has been placed is as a substitute for window-glass. The panes have the appearance of "milky glass." They intercept the light rays, while letting the heat rays through. This is considered by the inventors a desirable feature for greenhouses. The "glass" is cheap, and is calculated to last four years.

THE cauliflower was first brought to England from Cyprus, where it is said to grow to great perfection, although it is not supposed to be indigenous to that island. The exact introduction of the plant into English horticulture is not known; but it was certainly cultivated in this country at the beginning of the seventeenth century, although as a rarity which could be produced only by the wealthy and appear on their tables. In the year 1619 two cauliflowers cost three shillings.

## UNCLE ROBERT'S LESSON.

—10:—

"TWELVE o'clock, and the washin' ain't out yet!" said Hetty Francis, with a frightened glance at the clock. "But I've such a sight o' set backs! I'll have to wait a spell now, till the hired men have had their dinner."

She blew the horn at the back door, then made all haste to set the plentiful, if plain, meal on the table, which feat she had barely accomplished before her uncle and his three stalwart helpers arrived on the scene.

"Hetty does make nice pies!" said John Wood, reaching for a second slice.

"I don't mind if I drink another cup o' coffee," observed Sam Brown, "with plenty o' sugar, Hetty, please!"

While Jim Sarling made a plunge at the butter with his own knife, remarking, *sotto voce*, that "to his taste there wa'n't no butter like June butter, an' it didn't come but once a year!"

"No hot bread!" said Uncle Robert, with a comprehensive glance around the board, "nor riz biscuit—eh, Hetty?"

"I couldn't manage it to-day," said Hetty, with a conscious-stricken look. "With the washin' and all—"

"Hetty's yesterday's bread's good enough for me!" observed John, philosophically.

"For my part," said Uncle Robert, "I don't see how these women-folks contrive to put in the time, potterin' around all day, a-doin' next to nothin'."

"Oh, now, that ain't fair!" spoke up Sam Brown, good naturedly. "Tain't no joke to cook an' wash an' iron for four men."

The colour had risen in two round spots to Hetty's cheeks. A quick retort hovered on her lips, when Uncle Robert interrupted the unspoken words.

"Oh, by the way," said he, "I'd 'most forgotten to say anything about it, but brother Alfred's gal's to be here to-day."

"Brother Alfred's gal?"

"Wy, yes, your cousin Rita, from Wynton—your Uncle Alfred's gal, that's to teach the school here. Alfred, he war inquirin' round for a place, an' I calculated we could board her here, so I told him to send her on. He's willin' to pay twenty-five shillings a week, and that counts 'up.'"

Hetty looked at her uncle with startled eyes.

"But there ain't no room for her to sleep in," said she.

"She can have your room, and you can take the little corner chamber in the garret. One person more or less in the family don't make no difference, and twenty-five shillings is twenty-five shillings."

Hetty said not a word.

Of what avail was it to remind Uncle Robert that the little garret chamber was cold in winter and hot in summer, that the roof leaked, and that rats played high carnival there?

She only helped John Wood to a cucumber pickle, and replenished the coffee-pot for the third time.

"There's a gal now—brother Alfred's darter," reflectively observed Mr. Francis, as he sprinkled pepper and vinegar over his summer beets—"as is worth her salt—arnen' five pounds a month at teachin'." If Hetty could make money like that! But Hetty hadn't never no faculty!

"I never had a chance!" cried Hetty, with rising colour and tear-brimmed eyes. "I've been kept hard at work since I was a child, and—"

"There, there! don't get excited!" said Uncle Robert, waving his hand in a patronising manner. "Gals is queer creatures. You can't so much as speak to 'em, but they fly off at a tangent. Get things ready for Alfred's gal, that's all I ask of you, and mind you hev some fried chicken for supper. John Wood hain't had a bite of fried chicken since he's been here. And look arter the young goslin' that's comin' outen the shell down to the barn, I suspect there's a weasel abroad somewheres, and mind the calves don't git into the corn. I reely must mend that gate-

pin some o' these days. Come, boys, if you're sure you can't worry down no more vittles—"

It was not until the four men had shuffled off to the barn-yard to look at Uncle Robert's latest investment in a new cow, ere they returned to the hayfield, that Hetty sank wearily down into a patch-cushioned rocker and burst into tears.

"I'm worked harder'n any slave," said she, "and don't never have no chance to go nowhere nor see nothin', and yet Uncle Robert thinks I ain't worth my keep."

"Why, what's the matter, Hetty? You're Hetty Francis, aren't you?"

A sweet, cheery voice sounded on her ear—a light hand touched her shoulder.

Hetty jumped to her feet.

"Are you my Uncle Alfred's daughter?" she cried.

"Why, of course I am! Harriet Francis, just like yourself. Named after our dear old grandmother—only they call me Rita."

A smouldering feeling of resentment had possessed Hetty's heart towards this unknown relation; but it was all dispersed now in the light of those clear, hazel eyes—the sunshine of that winning smile.

In a second she knew that she should like her new cousin.

"Nothing is the matter," said she, "except that the washin' is behind to-day, and I'm clean discouraged and tired out."

"Where's the girl?"

Pretty Rita looked inquiringly around.

"I'm the girl!" Hetty answered.

"Then I'll be girl, too!" Rita laughed out, taking off her gloves and unfastening her piquant little cape. "You go and hang out the clothes, and I'll see about clearing off this table. Because I'm to board here, father says, and you and I are to be great friends."

Hetty looked wistfully at her.

"Kiss me, won't you?" said she. "Oh, yes, I'd so like to be friends with you! I haven't never had no girl friends."

And Rita kissed her with a kiss that carried a whole heartfull of love with it.

The three hired men were overcome with embarrassment, when, on arriving in time for the fried chicken and hot waffles that evening, they were confronted with such a daintily-dressed, smiling young lady.

Even Uncle Robert himself was momentarily abashed at the style and beauty of brother Alfred's daughter.

"The new school-teacher," whispered John Wood to Sam Brown.

"Earns five pounds a-month," muttered Jim Tarling. "Five pounds!"

"Dressed up like a fashion plate!" inwardly reflected Wood. "Proper nice-looking though."

Rita would not hear of banishing Hetty to the garret chamber.

"Why can't we share the same room together?" she coaxed. "I should so like a companion, and there's plenty of room."

Uncle Robert evinced ostentatious approval of his new niece, and it required all Hetty's hearty affection for the new-comer to preserve her from the stings of jealousy.

"I don't see," said Uncle Robert, "why Hetty can't earn money like you do."

"How much do you pay her?" asked Rita, lifting her eyes to his face.

"Me!—Pay Hetty? Why, her board an' clothes, to-be-sure. It's all she's worth."

"And what does she do?"

"Just: odd turns about the house. She did pester me for an allowance once, but I soon laid it down to her that I wasn't going to hev no such nonsense."

"Oh!" said Rita.

Never in her life had Hetty Francis had a genuine sympathetic woman friend before, and it was an indescribable relief to pour out her troubles in Rita's ear.

"It's a shame!" cried warm-hearted Rita.

"Why you do the work of three women in this house. You rise early and lie down late; you have no recreations, no holidays, and Sundays you work harder than ever, because Uncle Robert likes to invite people here to see how nice he has things. Oh, you needn't think that I am blind!

You are pale and thin, because you are over-worked. You don't like to go anywhere, because Uncle Robert won't give you any new clothes until you've worn out Aunt Hepsy's old wardrobe. It's an imposition, that's what it is, and I wouldn't submit to it if I were you."

"But," sighed Hetty, "what can I do?"

"Tell him once again how matters stand!" cried Rita, her lovely eyes flashing. "Insist upon fair wages for fair work."

Thus instigated, Hetty made her plea, but Uncle Robert's brow grew dark.

"I don't want to hear no such nonsense as this," he roared. "Wages! Ain't you got your home, and board and clothes? What else d'ye want? Why, I never heard such talk in my life!"

"Is it yes, or no?" persisted Hetty.

"It's no-o-o!" thundered Uncle Robert.

That same evening Rita incidentally alluded to the fact that they would all rise between the next morning, for she was going to give them their breakfast, and hadn't much time before school hours began.

"Why, where's Hetty?" asked John.

"Oh, didn't you know it—She's gone!"

Uncle Robert dropped the gate-pin he was whitening; John let the two-days-old copy of the newspaper slip to the floor; Sam stared with wide-open mouth.

"She wants to make a living for herself," severely added Rita; "to earn a little money. Every girl wants that, you know."

"Humph!" growled Uncle Robert. "I'd like to see her make money! Why, she never had no more gumption than a katydid! She'll be back quick enough, you'll find."

"But in the meantime," said Rita, coolly, "you must look around for some one to fill her place, for, as you can easily imagine, I have got my hands full."

"I guess that's easy done," said Uncle Robert, beginning to whistle afresh.

But, to his infinite amazement, it was not so easy a task as he had fancied, and after many vain efforts and stinging disappointments, he found himself with two wasteful, complaining, inefficient hired girls in possession, for every one had resolutely refused to do the work alone.

"It was too much," they averred, "for one."

"It'll ruin me—it'll clean ruin me!" groaned Uncle Robert, wringing his hands. "Two pounds a month for one and twenty-five shillings for t'other—and every Thursday afternoon and every Sunday evening out! And look at them halloes o' bread in the pig's part, and my best towels, not three years old, took for cleanin'—cloths, and a broom a week stumped through; an' they won't wash unless I get 'em a new patent wringer, and the fat-scrapes all thrown away, an' nothin' half took care of! Don't you know any one I could get, Rita, as would look arter things as Hetty used to do? I declare to goodness I can't live so!"

Rita knit her brows and reflected.

"There's a young woman working for father," said she, "a capital housekeeper, and the best economist in the world—at least, so he says. And since my married sister is coming back next week, he may be able to dispense with her. But she has two pounds a month."

"It's wuth it—it's wuth it!" breathlessly cried Uncle Robert. "I'll go to Wynton and see brother Alfred at once, and secure her. This hired-gal business will be the death of me."

Brother Alfred was sitting on his porch reading the newspaper as Mr. Francis came up.

"Yes," said he, "she's a smart gal. The best gal I ever had. Thorough-going. Fraps you may be able to get her—though I doubt if she'll come to you for two pounds a month."

"I'll make it two-pounds-ten," gasped Uncle Robert, "since you say she's so good."

"Well, you can try," said Brother Alfred. "Here she is."

He flung open the door of the kitchen, and there, making a blackberry shortcake at the whitely-scoured table, stood his own niece, Hetty Francis.

"Why—it's—Hetty!" cried he.

"Yes," nodded Brother Alfred; "Hetty it is!



The best, smartest creature that ever stepped, and worth her weight in gold!"

Uncle Robert swallowed something like a lump in his throat.

"Hetty," said he, "will you come back?"—here he swallowed a second lump—"to me for two-pound-ten a month! For I do verily believe you will earn it."

Hetty went up to him and kissed him.

"Yes, Uncle Robert," said she; "I'll come back."

For the old man had learned a lesson, and his teachers had been Hetty Francis, and Brother Alfred's daughter.

NEGRO graves in South America are sometimes curiously garnished with the bottles of medicine used by the departed in their final illness, and the duration of the malady is easily guessed by the number of bottles. Often these are the only things to mark the mound, and everything about the graveyard bears the marks of the haste characteristic of a superstitious people in all matters concerning the dead.

PERHAPS it is not generally known, and certainly not generally attended to, that an Act of Parliament was passed in the reign of Edward III., prohibiting anyone from being served, at dinner or supper, with more than two courses, except upon some great holidays, there specified, on which he may be served with three. This Act has never been repealed, and is therefore still in force.

THE most interesting sight in Prague is the old Hebrew cemetery. It is in the centre of the city, surrounded by thick walls. There are thousands of ancient, moss-covered slabs, some bearing inscriptions of great antiquity, which only Hebrew scholars can decipher. The cemetery is unused, but no other Hebrew burial-ground in Europe can compare with it for age or general interest to the antiquarian.

It is said that the Bank of France has an invisible studio in a gallery behind the cashiers, so that at a given signal from one of them, any suspected customer can instantly have his photograph taken without his knowledge. The camera has also become very useful in the detection of frauds, a word or figure that to the eye seemed completely erased being clearly reproduced in photographs of the document that had been tampered with.

THE Gulf Stream is well described as a river in the bosom of the ocean. Its banks and its bottom are of cold water, while its current is of warm; it takes its rise in the Gulf of Mexico, and empties itself into the Arctic Sea. The Gulf Stream is more rapid than the Amazon, more impetuous than the Mississippi, and its volume more than 3,000 times greater. Its waters are of an indigo blue, and the line of junction can be easily marked by the eye.

DURING the Reign of Terror in Paris in 1793 many of the nobility were reduced to starvation and beggary. The abattoirs sent their hides fresh to the tanneries without removing the tails, and in cleaning them the tails were thrown away. One of these noble beggars asked for a tail; and it was willingly given to him. He took it to his lodgings and made the first dish of ox-tail soup. He told others of his good luck, and they annoyed the tanners so much that a price was put upon them.

THE Laughing Plant grows in Arabia, and is called by that name because the seeds produce effects like those caused by laughing gas. The flowers are of a bright yellow, and the seed-pods are soft and woolly, while the seeds resemble small black beans. Only two or three grow in a pod. The natives dry and pulverise them, and the powder, taken in small doses, makes the soberest person behave like a circus clown or a madman, for he will dance, sing, and laugh most boisterously, and cut the most fantastic capers; and he is in an uproariously ridiculous condition for about an hour. When the excitement ceases, the exhausted exhibitor of these antics falls asleep, and when he awakes he has not the slightest remembrance of his frisky doings.

## THE BRIDE'S PROMISE.

—10:—  
He clasped her in his fond embrace,  
And kiss'd her forehead, fair as snow;  
He saw light up that angel face  
Devotion's pure and radiant glow;  
And, oh, if e'er to man was given  
An emblem of that faith above,  
'Twas when, with eyes upturn'd to Heaven,  
Her lips pronounced the vow of love.  
—11:—  
'Twas thus she spoke:

"When Joy's bright lamp shall cease to shine,  
And sorrow marks the wearying day,  
Here, on this pillowy breast of mine,  
Thy heart may ease its cares away.

"My smile shall cheer thine hour of gloom,  
And soothe thee when thine ills draw near;  
And whate'er may be our doom  
I'll freely yield, without a tear.

"And when grown old, and worn with age,  
Such be the will of Heaven above,  
My hands shall smooth life's tottering stage,  
And call to mind our early love.

"And as the last sad hour draws nigh  
That parts thee from this sorrowing breast,  
I'll point thy hopes to yon blue sky,  
And whisper: 'Here the soul hath rest.'"

ALL the members of the English Royal Family have a great fancy for designing jewellery, and, as a rule, design all the presents they give each other.

ONE of the latest fads in Paris is a tiny sunshade with an immensely long handle which serves as a walking stick. The parasol is made to match the costume, and turns on a swivel, so that it may be held before the face like a fan.

A NEW scheme is being tried in Australia, with good results, for the extermination of rabbits. Cartridges generating poisonous gas are put in the burrows, the holes are closed, and the rabbits are killed by the poison in the smoke.

IN China a traveller wishing for a passport is compelled to have the palm of his hand brushed over with fine oil-paint; he then presses his hand on thin damp paper, which retains an impression of the lines. This is used to prevent transference of the passport, as the lines of no two hands are alike.

A CHINESE native paper gives some interesting details as to the progress of vaccination. Thirty years ago the practice of inoculation with cow virus was introduced into Kiangsi by a prominent member of the community. At first the people were much prejudiced against vaccination, but gradually prejudice vanished, and inoculation gained ground everywhere. Since the beginning of the year numbers of children of the poorer and middle classes have been vaccinated at the stations established for the purpose, while the doctors are now sent for to attend for like purposes the children of the wealthy and high-class families.

ONE of the most remarkable of trees or shrubs grows near some springs about twelve miles north of Tuscanora. It is about six or seven feet high, with a trunk which at its base is three times the size of an ordinary man's wrist. It has numberless branches and twigs, and resembles somewhat the barberry. Its truly wonderful characteristic is its luminosity, which is so great that on the darkest night it can be plainly seen a mile away. A person standing near could read the finest print by its light. Its foliage is extremely rank, and its leaves resemble somewhat those of the aromatic bay-tree in shape, size, and colour. The luminous property is due to a gummy substance, which can be transferred to the hand by rubbing, and with the transfer the phosphorescent light, while that on the leaf disappears. This luminosity is thought to be due to a parasitic form. The Indians regard it with superstition, and will not come near it even in daytime. They give it a name which means "witch-tree."

## FOR EVER AND A DAY.

### CHAPTER XIII.

CUTHBERT DENISON did not remain to meet the guests from the Barn at luncheon the next day.

Early in the morning he sent a pencilled note to Jocelyn's room, declaring that among the letters forwarded to him from town, he had found one necessitating his immediate return.

Needless to say, Jocelyn hastened at once to his cousin's room.

"This is a great disappointment, Cuthbert," he said, and his voice was full of real regret as he spoke.

Cuthbert who was already up and dressed, assented quietly.

"And unfortunately, it is unavoidable," he replied. "I must leave by the first possible train I can catch. I find there is a good one at ten-thirty."

Jocelyn nodded his head.

"Express all the way up. I will drive you to the station, if you must go!" he said, there was a questioning sound in the last words.

Cuthbert smiled faintly.

"There is no doubt on that point, Jocelyn; go I must, most decidedly."

His servant, a replica of his own grave neat self, was already packing up his things.

Jocelyn gave a little sigh.

"And I wanted you to be with us to-day, most particularly," he said.

There was a shy touch in his voice and manner, and at the slight emphasis on the word "us."

Cuthbert winced, it conveyed so much to him. He turned and gave some sharp order to his valet, it was a relief to him.

"I hope Madlle Vignetti is better this morning, Jocelyn?" he said, after this had passed.

Jocelyn shook his head, and a shadow fell over his face.

"I don't know anything for certain, but I fear Tasi will not be very well," he spoke with a little preoccupation.

Cuthbert having dismissed his servant. There was a curious expression on his face as he turned to his cousin.

"Do you know, I have been very much annoyed with myself, since last night, Jocelyn," he said, in a frank sort of way. "I am afraid I sounded very foolish to you, in what I said about Madlle Vignetti; confess, were you not annoyed?"

The shadow that had fallen on Jocelyn's face, lingered there.

"Not annoyed in reality, only you startled me, Cuthbert, and as no doubt you can see now, you troubled me a little also. I put so much faith in your judgment old fellow, you know," Jocelyn said, affectionately, "that when you make a definite and determined statement, such as you did last night, it was bound to affect me tremendously, although at the same time I could not fail to realise you had been mistaken. If what you suggested had been in the slightest degree true!"

Jocelyn paused eloquently.

Cuthbert pretended to be sorting out his letters, but his keen eyes were fixed on the young man before him.

"I don't see that anything so terrible would have happened, even if my supposition had been correct," he said.

Jocelyn knitted his brows.

"Nothing terrible perhaps, but much that would be most sad, and to me at least distressing. I have grown very fond of Tasi; I feel towards her just as I know I should have felt, if I had been blessed with a sister; the very thought of your suggestion being true oppresses me more than I can say, Cuthbert; more especially just now."

Cuthbert laughed a short laugh.

"You are the most simple minded, boyish creature in the world, Jocelyn," he said; there was the faintest of faint sneers in his words, which however Jocelyn did not notice. "Now what possible difference could it make to you, whether Madlle Vignetti were enamoured of you or not;

since you have had no active share in bringing this thing to pass, why distress yourself about it?"

Jocelyn winced a little.

"Must one think always for oneself only, Cuthbert?" was his query.

Cuthbert smiled.

"Well, it is generally considered advisable; at least you may rest quite assured that no one else will think so satisfactorily about, and for, you, as you will yourself."

Jocelyn always disliked this kind of cheap cynicism, and by his silence, Cuthbert knew he was displeased now.

He laid his long, thin, white hand, on his cousin's shoulder.

"My dear boy," he said, lightly, yet conveying a touch of regret and affection in his voice, which instantly appealed to Jocelyn's warm heart,—

"My dear boy; forgive me; you must remember we lawyers are apt to discount all sorts and kinds of emotions. Though I talk in this strain, I assure you, I understand and sympathise absolutely with your feelings on a matter like this; you are such a good hearted chap (Cuthbert had very nearly said "fool") that you immediately begin to coin all sorts of imaginary troubles for others; but don't let this thing last; you may be quite sure that if Madlle Vignetti has been so unwise as to encourage a 'pendant' for you, she will equally show enough courage and wisdom as to suppress this 'pendant' as quickly as possible, now that she realises your future is already shaped, and given to another."

Cuthbert's lips were very white as he spoke these last words; Jocelyn frowned a little.

"You still speak," he said, a trifle impatiently, "as though you believed in this theory, and yet just a moment ago you confessed to me, you had been mistaken in what you said last night, Cuthbert."

"There was a curious uneasiness, a sort of pain at once sharp and oppressive, that came over Jocelyn, as he dwelt on the subject of Tasi, and this supposititious love of hers."

Cuthbert slipped his hand from his cousin's shoulder.

"I meant you to understand that I had been mistaken in my view of Madlle Vignetti's nature and possible attitude, not in my knowledge of facts."

Jocelyn turned sharply.

"My dear Cuthbert, do explain yourself, you may as well."

Cuthbert smiled.

"Here it is, then, as clear as daylight; your cousin Anastasi Vignetti loves you as she will never love any other man in all the length of her life; loves you with all the intensity, the abandon, the passion of an Italian nature; oh! believe me, I know what I am saying now; I am not a fool in these matters, and I never make a big mistake. Anastasi, I say, loves you, Jocelyn, in this fashion; the heavy fainting fit that fell upon her last night, was the outcome of intense suffering, following upon your confidence to her. She is not very strong, and the sudden destruction of all her dreams and hopes was too much for her. So far, I make no alteration in what I said to you last night, the only modification which reflection has brought, is in my judgement of Anastasi's character. Last night in my hurry, I judged her by the tenets of her nationality, which are prone to violence, to revenge, to evil thoughts, when jealousy is brought into contact with it; but since we parted last night, I have been thinking over the girl deeply, and I have come to the conclusion that my first impression was wrong, and that so far from cherishing any 'vendetta' against you, or against the woman you hope to win for your wife, she will try always to be a loyal, a sincere friend to you both; burying away out of sight the secret of her hopeless passion, overcoming it as well as she can, and as long as her physical strength will allow her. No, I was wrong, certainly," Cuthbert said, in a musing tone, noting with the most intense pleasure how pale and troubled Jocelyn's face had grown during this speech; "most certainly wrong in crediting Madlle Vignetti with any but the sweetest, and most womanly feelings. You need

have no fears for your future happiness, Jocelyn, your cousin from Italy, will never work in the very smallest way to harm you, or bring sorrow upon you. She will love you just the same, only I fear it is more than probable, that this burning and unrequited love will spell the word death for her, a little sooner than her age warrants."

"And you call this no sorrow."

The words left Jocelyn's lips with a sort of cry. Everything that Cuthbert had said had gone direct through his heart. Denison had spoken in a calm, quiet voice, with no exaggeration, no seeming endeavour to make any point, but carrying conviction in its every note.

"Far—far sooner would I face a world of jealousy or of vengeance than have to realize such a thing as this. Cuthbert, you oppress me—have you really spoken in earnest? Do not jest with me on such a subject—it is too sad—too sacred."

"Is it my habit to jest on things—do you suppose I have so little feeling for her, poor child, as to make sport of her most holy grief, her whole life's secret?"

Cuthbert's tone was quietly indignant, and Jocelyn instantly put out his hand.

"Forgive me," he said simply, "I should not have said that; only—I am deeply troubled, Cuthbert. What you have said has fallen like a heavy cloud over the brilliancy of my happiness, and I was so happy. I—I never knew what real happiness could mean until yesterday."

"My dear fellow, you must not be so sensitive. Is it your fault this thing has happened? Are you to blame for Madlle Vignetti's foolishness? Surely you are not going to let a small thing like this destroy your peace of mind?"

"I do not call it a small thing," Jocelyn said in a low voice; "I call it a terrible thing. I shall live henceforth feeling that, as Anastasi grows weaker and weaker, I am the power, the wretch, who is pushing her into her grave. Cuthbert, you see, yourself, this is no small thing."

Cuthbert linked his arm in Jocelyn's.

"Come," he said gently, "we must go down. I shall not catch my train if we are not very sharp. I am sorry I must go now, under all circumstances. I can see you are going to behave foolishly over this matter, and after all, I am sure you must see yourself there is no occasion for such self-reproach. Is Madlle Vignetti the first woman who has been so rash as to fall in love with you uninvited? Did you fret yourself over all these unfortunate damsels? Not a bit of it; then why should you make a difference here?"

"Because, in the first place, if such women have been in existence I have not known of them; and because in the second, Tasi is so unlike most other women. She is a spiritualized, ethereal kind of creature, unworldly and most delicate. The knowledge that this child should be caused suffering, however unintentionally, by me, is something I cannot accept calmly, Cuthbert; it touches me too deeply."

"Very well then, the next best thing for you to arrange is to ship Madlle Tasi back to Italy just as quickly as possible. Ah! here we are at the breakfast-room. Now, dear old fellow, rouse yourself. Don't look so glum or you will spoil the effect of my first visit to Yelverton, and you will bring down the vials of Lady Hilliard's anger upon my head when she hears what I have been saying."

"Oh! I shall never tell her this," Jocelyn said involuntarily; "after all it is only your supposition, and even if it were reality, the secret does not belong to me. Margaret!" how tenderly the name escaped his lips, and how Cuthbert's heart contracted as he heard it! "Margaret would be the very last person in the world to desire to know such a thing, she is so full of infinite delicacy, of sympathy, of tact."

Cuthbert assented gently to all this.

"I will leave some messages for Lady Hilliard with you, Jocelyn," he said, as he swallowed some breakfast hurriedly. "I can give them to you as we are driving to the station. Now I must ask permission to take farewell of my uncle. Shall we be disturbing him too early?"

"I think not," Jocelyn answered, his whole voice, mien and mood was unquiet and troubled.

Cuthbert missed nothing of this, and his heart

beat with fierce delight at the knowledge that even at the very outset he had been able to cast so thorough a gloom upon this man's happiness. He knew Jocelyn so well, and he was too sure therefore that the method he had adopted of bringing Anastasi's secret to his cousin's knowledge was something that would never be forgotten, despite all the sweetness, the glory of love's happiness that had come to surround him.

"Come with me, we will go up to my father's room," Jocelyn said; "he has not risen yet, but I will prepare him for your departure. He will be sorry that you must go so soon, Cuthbert, but you will come again of course, now that you have found your way here. You will remember it will be your own fault if you do not come frequently, in fact, whenever you are inclined."

Cuthbert made no response to all this. He knew exactly what value to put upon Jocelyn's announcement where Sir Noel was concerned. He knew that, despite all his desire to please his boy, Sir Noel had neither been glad to see him, or eager to welcome him again.

Cuthbert had always cordially hated his uncle—now he loathed him more than ever.

He turned into Sir Noel's own particular sitting-room, which adjoined the bedroom occupied by the owner of Yelverton Castle.

"I will wait for you here. Do not, I beg, let my uncle disturb himself on my account, Jocelyn; if he is not well enough to receive me I shall quite understand."

Jocelyn gave him a smile as they separated, Cuthbert going into the front apartment, while Jocelyn knocked softly at his father's bedroom door.

Mr. Denison walked slowly round his uncle's sanctum. It was a charming apartment, richly furnished, full of costly ornaments, and hung with some extremely beautiful and valuable pictures. One part of the room was set apart as a sort of oratory. Cuthbert sauntered towards it. The shape of the room retreated till it formed a sort of square smaller room, and here it was that Sir Noel kept, as in a sanctuary, all those things which had belonged specially to his young wife, and which possessed a sacred value in his eyes.

There was the silver crucifix before which she had knelt, the rosary of scented beads, the picture of the Madonna and child.

A dozen other religious things were gathered in this place, whilst on the wall was fixed a splendid cabinet, containing books and some ornaments; a few odds and ends of toys such as a child has, and no less than four miniatures, all giving forth the lovely Italian face of Jocelyn's mother.

Almost unconsciously Cuthbert opened the cabinet. He took out these miniatures, he scrutinized them carefully; then his hands strayed carelessly over the other things treasured so fondly by Sir Noel Gretton. Finally he picked up a book bound in tortoiseshell and gold, it was small, and evidently had been well used. It opened instantly at the order of the mass. Jocelyn's mother must have carried this book frequently.

Idly, irrelevantly, Cuthbert Denison turned it over. Neither old nor religious things had any interest in his eyes; neither was it possible for him to comprehend the spirit of the man or woman who could endow so many lifeless objects with such a value.

Suddenly, however, he gave a great start. The book had opened at the fly-leaf; on this page there was an inscription in fine delicate Italian handwriting. As easily as though it had been printed English, Cuthbert read that Italian dedication. It was dated about thirty years before, and ran, translated, thus—

"The gift of my father Paolo Vignetti, on my sixteenth birthday, which also was the day on which I was wedded to his old friend Luigi Schiotti. May our blessed Mother and Lady have me always in her care!" Beneath was the date, and then the single word "Marie."

As though he had been fascinated by a snake, Cuthbert Denison gazed and gazed at that old, finely written inscription. His blood was coursing



madly in his veins, his heart beat almost to suffocation.

Again and again he read over the words—"which also was the day on which I was wedded to his old friend Luigi Schiotti."

His subtle, cunning brain had instantly realized one truth—this dead woman, this idolized wife, this mother whom Jocelyn had never known, had been no single girl when Sir Noel had married her, but a widow—the widow of her father's old friend Luigi Schiotti.

The sound of Jocelyn's voice roused Cuthbert, swiftly he replaced the book, closed the cabinet, and was standing gazing at it in an apparently reverent mood, as Jocelyn came in, full of regret.

"My father is so sorry, Cuthbert," he said gently, "but he has had an exceedingly bad night and is unequal to seeing anyone this morning. I have only spoken to Greenson, his man; I am so sure my father would have seen you if he had been able, please forgive him."

Cuthbert had to exercise the most extraordinary effort to subdue his excitement and sudden agitation; a feeling as new to him as it was unexpected.

"I should be indeed an extraordinary individual if I could find anything to object to in my uncle's conduct," he said, his voice hurried and uncertain. "Besides," here he spoke more deliberately, "besides, Jocelyn, I shall take you at your word—it will not be long before I am down again. Yelverton has always held a great attraction for me; but now that I have been here—that I know all it contains," the cold grey eyes went for an instant to that cabinet on the wall, "its fascination has grown threefold deeper—it is to me a place apart and above all others in the world. I love it as though it were indeed my own, my very own home."

Jocelyn's handsome face lit up.

He had never heard his cousin speak so warmly before, his own generous heart was fired by what he imagined was this evidence of a most generous spirit in his cousin. He had feared a little Cuthbert might have been hurt at his father's inability to say a temporary farewell—now, however, he saw at once that such a thing had no place in Cuthbert's thoughts.

"Make it your real home, henceforth, dear old fellow," he answered, affectionately; "turn to it as if were your own in deed and in truth. You well know that here you will always find a welcome and a brother—a room shall be set aside for you, a place shall always be laid at the table, so that all you have to do will be to walk in and say to yourself you are in your proper home."

Cuthbert smiled faintly.

"We must go—it is late," was all he said, but he clasped Jocelyn's hand with a grip like iron. How was Jocelyn Gretton to fathom the significance conveyed in that grip? how realize that his simple, earnest words were instantly distorted into a different meaning by the mad, evil, excited spirit which dwelt in Cuthbert's heart at this moment.

If an angel from heaven had come to rend aside the veil, to show Jocelyn Gretton the horrible suggestion which was fast developing into a determination in his enemy cousin's heart, our hero would have struggled valiantly not to believe the truth—to him it would have been absolutely too horrible, too inconceivable; and yet the day was not far distant when all too surely Jocelyn was to realize the true worth of this man whose hand he now clasped in his so affectionately. The day when bereft of his father, plunged into a desolation of grief and doubt through his love, he was to be confronted with Cuthbert in the guise of one who would come to urge the most terrible of all humiliations a proud, honourable man could suffer; the burden of an accusation against the hitherto stainless memory of his mother, which forced as it would be to the bitter end, would mean not only sorrow and shame unfathomable, but dishonour in favour of the very man who brought this blow upon him—disinheritance, dishonour and poverty.

#### [CHAPTER XIV.]

JOCELYN was lost in thoughts that were far from being altogether pleasant ones, as he drove back to Yelverton after having conveyed Cuthbert to the station. His mind was diverted from the ecstasy of his great, great happiness by remembrance of what Cuthbert had said about Anastasi. Jocelyn was, as we have said before, one of the least vain or self-conscious men that it would be possible to meet with anywhere. In this respect he was singularly unlike his brethren in the world of fashion, for among the men with whom he mingled, as a rule vanity was a marked and predominating quality—it was, therefore, from no weak or vain motive that Jocelyn dwelt so persistently on what Cuthbert had said.

He was, in fact, shocked, grieved and amazed. Tasi had never seemed to regard him in any other light than the one in which he regarded her; as a being who by circumstance, if not nature, could grow into one of the closest and dearest of relatives.

Her goodness to his father, and the quiet charm of her mind, as well as the physical beauty and attraction which belonged to her, had claimed instantly for Tasi a place in his affections and sympathy. Beyond or above this brotherly love, Jocelyn, as we know well, had never gone.

Engrossed as he had been in the beautiful dreams that ever since his meeting with Margaret Hilliard had come to him so swiftly, so surely, no other woman living could stand as a woman in Jocelyn's thoughts.

This statement made so convincingly by Cuthbert, had come, therefore, as a heavy blow. His acute, subliminal cousin had chosen the very best form in which to launch out this blow. It was the suggestion of Anastasi's patience, her secret suffering, her increased frailness, her possible death from the force of her suppressed and unhappy love that was so terrible for Jocelyn to realize.

He had only to recall the girl's delicacy, her pale wan face, her slender form, those big dark eyes, to feel the weight which must be attached to Cuthbert's tragic prophecy.

His heart was sad and troubled as he drove up to the entrance; a sort of shyness, too, of pained uneasiness fell upon him as to how he should meet Anastasi, knowing now what he did know.

He entered the hall slowly and with a pre-occupied air, dreading, yet eager to see the girl so that with his own eyes he might note if already his happiness, that was to be so great a sorrow to her, had begun to make its mark.

A sweet and most agreeable relief was in store for him.

Clever man as Cuthbert was, he was yet not quite equal to a woman in certain things. He had hit very nearly on the truth when he had so delicately, yet so ruthlessly planted the thorn in Jocelyn's sensitive heart; he had, however, forgotten to count on Anastasi's pride and on her strength.

Though death itself were eating out her life of life, the Italian girl was the last creature on earth to let this truth be known, more especially to Jocelyn.

Anastasi had been sitting by her window when the cousins had driven away; she was still sitting there when Jocelyn returned alone. Something in the young man's attitude, in his expression, seemed to whisper to Anastasi's proud heart a hint of the truth.

Vaguely she recalled the events of the evening before, of Cuthbert's presence with her in the garden, of a curious sort of power he had exercised over her. In an instant she was on her feet; her delicate face dyed crimson with the hot rash of ashamed blood that spread over it at her imagination.

She grew calmer the next instant, being then as pale as she had been red, and without giving herself time to think or to realize to the full what she was doing. She went hurriedly down from her room, pausing only to fill her hands with a cluster of newly cut roses which were placed fresh in her apartment each morning by Jocelyn's orders.

She was just running down the stairs as Jocelyn entered, meeting that new and moody air.

With a laugh that rang through the old hall like a ripple of delicious music, Anastasi paused, and flinging a rose with well directed aim, she struck him so sharply that he looked up in amazement.

As he saw the girl standing on the stairs, her face wreathed with smiles, a colour in her cheeks and an air of natural and easy gaiety upon her, Jocelyn gave a sudden sigh of acute relief, and the burden Cuthbert had worked so assiduously to heap upon him seemed to slip all away from his shoulders.

"Tasi!" he cried, incredulously.

It seemed indeed hard to realize that this brilliant looking young creature, was one and the same with the poor little being he had carried into the house the evening before, her face ashy, grey, and cold as though in death.

"Where have you been? What do you mean by taking erratic drives early in the morning? Why did you not ask me to go, too?"

Jocelyn ran up the stairs.

"My dear, how are you?" he said, hurriedly. "You look better, of course, but are you really—really better? Oh! Tasi, you frightened me last night, I have been so unhappy about you, dear!"

"You are a silly boy, but a nice one, too; of course I am better; are you going to be frightened every time I faint? My dear Jocelyn, I shall keep you busy, I can tell you. I mean to faint on an average twice or three times a week; I like to be interesting; will you stand still while I settle this rose in your coat. I shall have to say something rude in Italian if you are not good, cousin Jocelyn."

"Tell me you are really better," Jocelyn replied to this. "No nonsense, I want the truth, Tasi, the real truth."

Anastasi settled the rose in his button-hole to her satisfaction; if her slender fingers quivered as the desire seized her to let them cling to the rough tweed of his coat—to draw his strong arms about her—no one knew this but herself.

She conquered her weakness nobly; lifting her magnificent eyes to his, she answered him quietly and simply,—

"I am really better—really and truly. I am not speaking nonsense, I am telling you the truth, dear brother."

The last word was spoken easily, tenderly.

Jocelyn's heart beat gratefully.

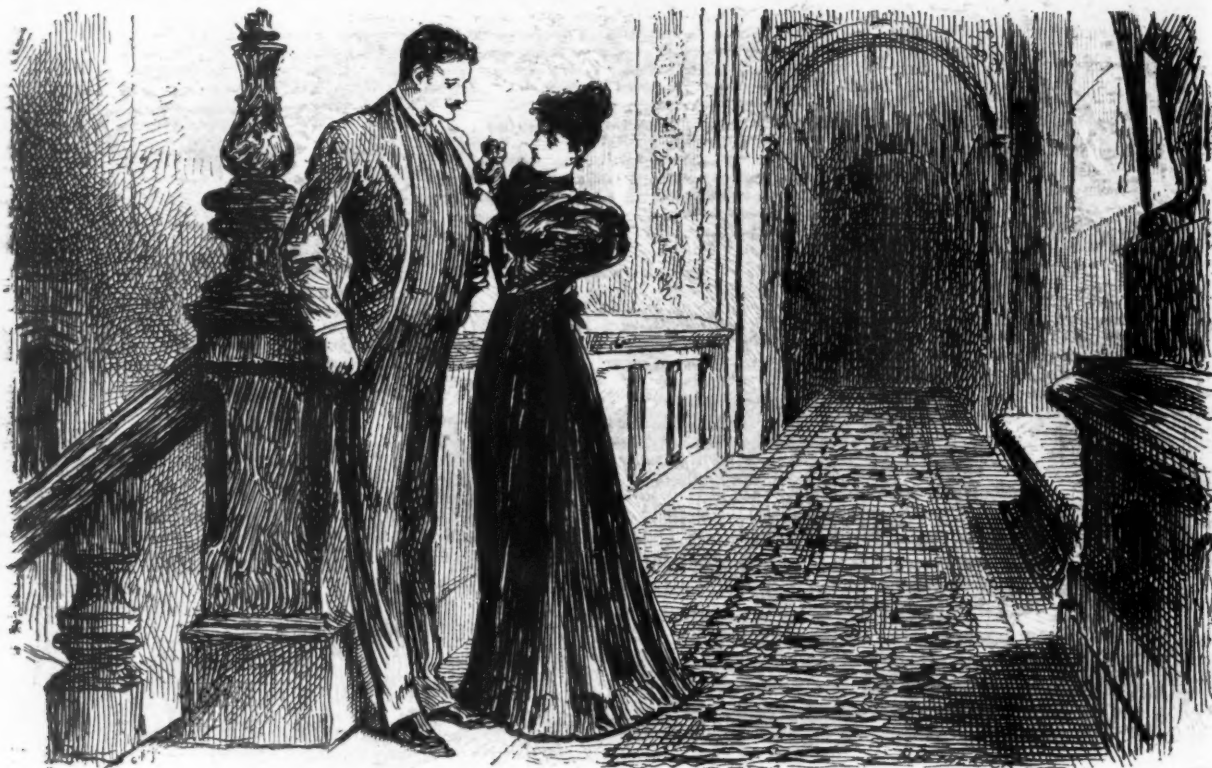
"Cuthbert is gone," he said; "come, let us go and have breakfast together. My father will not be up just yet; he has had one of his bad nights. I am afraid he was anxious about your illness, Tasi."

"I am sure he was," Anastasi said, regretfully, "but I went in to him quite early; now he sees I am well, so he is satisfied. Come then, I will give you breakfast, but I can't spare much time, I have to decorate the house with flowers. Have you forgotten we have guests to-day, my brother?"

So lightly, easily, gaily the brave girl hid her grief in her heart, rejoicing as she saw the difference each word she uttered brought upon him.

She could read him so thoroughly, he was so simple, so straightforward, so true. What man could be so noble as he, noble because he was so pure in heart, so childlike in his manhood?

"It is that fiend who has done this thing," she said, to herself, passionately, and a great hate sprang up in her heart for Cuthbert. "He is base—he is false; he does not love Jocelyn; I do not know all there is to know, but I know enough—and I must know more. If the happiness of winning his love can never be mine, and mine it never, never can be—then, at least, I can find some joy, a life task in being his friend, his protector. It is strange," and Anastasi smiled as she mused, "but though I am a poor feeble thing compared to him, yet I know for surety my strength will be greater than his, and I shall be given the power of helping him, of saving him, perchance. For this, then, must I stay on here, living a life which is not mine, claiming a kinship to which I have no right; for this, and this only, I must be silent as to my true self. Henceforth,



ANASTASI SETTLED THE ROSE IN JOCELYN'S BUTTONHOLE TO HER SATISFACTION.

I must work for two things—to discover the villain who betrayed my darling, who broke her heart, and to stand between Jocelyn Gretton and all evil that may come to him. It is my duty and my desire; all else I must forget, but these I shall never forget, for they are more to me than life itself!

Margaret had been for her walk to the stables. She had chosen her dog, a soft, delicious-looking puppy, with eyes like a saint, a nature as full of guile as any fox-terrier could wish to be.

Luncheon was over. It had been a merry meal, everything had been so pleasant. To Jocelyn's delight, his father had come down from his room to give his arm to Lady Charlotte. The whole table was wreathed with roses, arranged with a skill that aroused every guest's admiration.

"This is Tasi's work," Jocelyn had cried proudly.

Margaret glanced shyly at the pale, dark girl sitting beside Sir Noel.

"How delicate she looks! and how sad!" was her thought.

Kathleen Bartropp found an intense fascination in watching Anastasi's face, with its ever-moving expression and its superb dark eyes.

"How beautiful!" was Miss Bartropp's thought; "but what a tragedy is written in the face!"

Lady Charlotte had no particular views about Mlle. Vignetti. She did not trace the very smallest resemblance to Sir Noel's dead lovely wife, save, of course, the resemblance of nationality, and she took small interest, therefore, in Jocelyn's cousin.

After luncheon she sat and talked to Sir Noel, whilst Jocelyn took Margaret, a lovely, girlish creature, in her white frock, to the stables, and Kathleen Bartropp followed Anastasi up to the picture-gallery and to other points of interest in the old house.

Choosing the puppy was a difficult task.

"They are all so sweet," Margaret cried in

deepest admiration. "I love them all. I cannot make a choice."

"Then have them all," was Jocelyn's suggestion.

His voice was laden with the melody of his love, his eyes dreamily drawn to her beautiful face, his heart was full of ecstasy. Once again the harmony of his happiness was restored to him. He felt almost oppressed with the realization of its joy, it was so very, very great.

Lady Hilliard laughed slyly at his last words.

"Are you desiring to get rid of me?" she asked gaily, not daring, however, to lift her eyes to him. "You cannot think what I have endured before Kathie would consent to my having one dog; what do you suppose would happen if I were to appear with three! Now, please, you are to choose for me, Captain Gretton."

Jocelyn accepted the task, and the puppy selected was at once decorated with a bow of blue ribbon, an ornament which it promptly proceeded to devour.

"I will have him sent to you to-night. We will call him 'Bobbie,' shall we? That was the name of a dear old dog I used to have years ago."

Margaret assented eagerly, and they strolled back to the gardens.

"We must find the others," she said shyly.

Jocelyn's heart beat very, very fast.

"Are you tired of being with me alone, Margaret, so soon?" he asked.

She turned to him with a little reproachful cry, and the next moment, alone, under the wide spreading trees, Jocelyn gathered her, in her fresh, fair loveliness, to his heart, and whispered his passion of love, with his lips stealing kisses from her blushing face.

"You will be my wife, Margaret! You will love me always—always!" he cried, as he stood holding her thus, his eyes gazing into the depths of her brown, beautiful ones.

"I will be your wife, Jocelyn, and I will love you always—always."

"My dear! my sweet! my life! Ah, how

shall I ever let you know what you have given me? How shall I ever be able to utter my gratitude to Heaven, who has been so good to me? Cling to me, little Margaret. Kiss me, my wife that will be now so soon. Happiness is ours. Life and joy is upon us. What can come to us now, when we love one another and are together!"

A question that the future was to answer only too sadly; a future that was close at hand.

(To be continued.)

HUMAN blood derives its red colour from the myriads of red corpuscles it contains, yet these corpuscles are red only when collected in large numbers. When only a few are present they are of a very light straw colour.

THREE places at least are known where green snow is found. One of these places is near Mount Hecla, Iceland; another fourteen miles east of the mouth of the Obi; and the third near Quito, South America.

A SINGLE glass eye can rarely be worn more than a year without being polished, for the surface becomes roughened by the action of the tears, etc., and irritates the lids as they rub over it.

TRAVELLERS say the Chinese and Japanese call literally everything that comes out of the sea, this being particularly accounted for by the fact that salt is a luxury beyond the reach of the poorer Chinese classes, and, consequently, much appreciated by them, no matter what may be the form in which it is procured.

A KIND of peasant ornament seldom seen in this country, except when brought by travellers, is the silver jewellery, rings, bracelets, and the like, worn by Coolie women in the West Indies. These ornaments usually represent the savings of the Coolie husband, and are sold by the woman only with his permission. A man's wealth is measured by the splendour of his wife's adornment.





"HE MUST BE LOOKING FOR THE WILL!" EUREKA WHISPERED, EXCITEDLY.

## MY LADY'S COUSIN.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

##### LADY TREFUSIS'S COUSIN!

"MIND you bring your youngest daughter with you," Lady Trefusis said in her gentle voice, as she bade good-bye to Mrs. Woodville. "My husband met her yesterday in the woods, and fell in love with her."

"Fanny and Agnes will be sure to accompany me," Mrs. Woodville replied deprecatingly. "Lilian isn't out, and it would be a pity to interrupt her lessons, for she is such a dreadful romp."

"But I ask it as a favour," Lady Trefusis persisted, with that sweet smile and charming manner, which nobody anywhere in the neighbourhood of Westville had been known to resist. "Trefusis said to me only this morning at breakfast. 'Don't forget my little friend!'"

"I am sure Lilian ought to be much obliged to him," Mrs. Woodville said with an attempt at graciousness, "and if you really wish me to stretch a point."

"I do, most certainly. So that is settled. I only hope the weather will be kind to us," with an apprehensive look at the cloudy sky. "If not, I daresay we shall be able to amuse ourselves pretty well indoors."

"Nobody could be dull at the Castle," Mrs. Woodville replied, with truth as well as politeness. "The girls will absolutely count the days till the fifteenth."

"Your girls are so pretty. They are sure to enjoy themselves everywhere; and as to my husband's little friend, I will give her into the care of a cousin of mine, who is quite safe, and as good a boy as ever lived."

And then the Countess shook hands with her

hostess, and stepped into the Victoria which was waiting at the garden-gate. She drove on her round, saying something pleasant to everyone upon whom she called, whilst Mrs. Woodville waited with impatience for her daughters' return from the small tennis party to which they had gone earlier in the afternoon.

She knew that Lilian was upstairs in the schoolroom practising a difficult sonata, but she did not like to tell her of the special invitation which had been sent to her until she had consulted Fanny and Agnes on the subject. It was considered a law in the Woodville family that no younger sister should come out till her elder sister had married.

Now Fanny and Agnes were twins, so they came out at the same time, directly Emily, the eldest daughter became Mrs. Macartney. But they had not followed her example, so poor Lilian, though already eighteen, was still in the school-room, and likely to remain there for the present.

She did not consider this a great hardship, however, for she was young for her age, and so devoted to outdoor games that she cared very little for "society functions," as she called balls and "At homes."

"I don't see that it will matter a bit," Fanny said, good-naturedly, as she leant on her tennis racquet and turned her plump face towards her mother's.

"This is quite different to a ball. You see we begin in the garden with tennis and golf, then have a cold collation, followed by an informal dance—and come home like so many Cinderellas, by midnight."

"A girl of fifteen might go to it easily," Agnes put in complacently, "so nobody need suppose that Lil is out."

"That isn't the whole difficulty," Mrs. Woodville said with a sigh, for in spite of her intense predilection for the twins, she could see that their plump, good-natured physiognomies would not have a chance by the far more delicate and high-bred beauty of her youngest child's. They

would seem almost plain by comparison, though some people were kind enough to call them pretty now.

"Lil would look charming in pale blue, with a hat to match," Agnes said thoughtfully.

"It would be very becoming," Mrs. Woodville assented, but with an after-thought in her mind that it would make the child look perfectly ravishing, which was scarcely to be desired.

"So many girls wear white so that it is no distinction. We might lose Lil at any moment," Fanny said with a smile, "and never be able to find her; whilst in a blue frock she could never escape us."

The blue was decided on, the dressmaker written to, a hat of the same colour, with feathers to match, ordered; and when the fifteenth came, with brilliant sunshine and azure sky, Miss Lilian Woodville was a sight worth seeing.

Even her sisters were amazed at her beauty, and Mrs. Woodville watched her uneasily as she sat on the back seat of the landau, recognizing the unpleasant fact in all its vividness that the twins would not have the smallest chance when their younger sister appeared on the scene.

However, there was some consolation in the remembrance that Lady Trefusis, whom they had met a few days before, had again mentioned the young cousin (a perfectly harmless boy), who would take care of "the little one," and see that she enjoyed herself.

Now, if Lilian were entirely engrossed by a good-natured schoolboy, she would not get in her sisters' way at all; so the anxious mother, looking very well in her grey bonnet and rich corded silk, put her cares on one side and hoped for the best.

Castle Trefusis was not exactly a splendid mansion, but it was a delightful place, with grey walls and mullioned windows, with every sort of creeper clothing it in a robe of bewildering beauty—clematis and wisteria, passion flowers and Gloire de Dijon roses, honeysuckle and jessamine, magnolias and Virginian creepers, &c.

And then the gardens—the exquisitely con-

ceived mixture of colour in the carefully-cut beds, the delicious nooks and corners with shady boughs overhead, and the whisper of running water, the wilderness where the wild flowers sprang up amongst the ferns, and the broad, wide, undulating park beyond, with deer browsing under the shade of the grand old elms, and the bracken looking like waves of foliage breaking up through the turf.

Every sort of carriage drove up in turn to the pillared portico, for it was not Lady Trefusis's habit to ask the county people and forget the smaller gentry; and there was such a crowd on the lawn that it was difficult even to shake hands with the hostess.

Mrs. Woodville was an experienced woman of the world, so she allowed her way as unobtrusively as she had been taught to do in her youth at the Queen's drawing-room, and Fanny and Agnes, looking very nice in their heliotrope dresses, followed close in her wake; but Lillian was left hopelessly in the rear.

She could not see a single person she knew, and she began to wish herself safe back in the shabby little school-room at home, with nobody to stare at her as people were doing now, and which made her feel as if she were a base intruder who had come there uninvited.

Where were all Lady Trefusis's promises? Where was this good-natured cousin who was to see that she enjoyed herself?

She wasn't enjoying herself very much at the present moment, that was certain; and how she would be able to exist till twelve o'clock at night, she was afraid to think.

And then, just as she was in such desperate need of a friend, a particularly pleasant voice said close behind her,—

"Might I ask if you are Miss Lillian Woodville?"

Looking round quickly she saw a young man standing just inside the library window; and, forgetting even to answer his question, she said eagerly,

"Are you Lady Trefusis's cousin?"

He smiled amusedly, and the smile lit up his rather melancholy face in a wonderful manner.

"Trefusis is my cousin, and I dare say his wife is kind enough to call me here. What is it to you?"

"Everything," she said, simply, "because Lady Trefusis said her cousin was very good-natured, and would look after me a little."

"Just what I was going to propose," with a decided twinkle in his dark eyes; "but I'm not a bit good-natured. She invented it for the occasion."

"And you are not a boy, as she said you were," in a tone of disappointment.

"I was once, and I am still, compared to Trefusis. Come and have something in the way of refreshment."

"I don't want anything."

"But we shall both be frightfully thirsty. You are not too aged to enjoy an ice."

Not at all. An ice was still a delight to her unjaded fancy, and so she let him lead her gladly into a side room, where there was everything that could be desired in the way of most dainty refreshments.

He gave her a pine-apple ice, a delicious peach, a little cake that was made of cream and fluff; and insisted upon her having some iced claret-cup to prepare her for the heat of the afternoon.

There were numbers of people in the room, but she could not catch a glimpse of her mother and sisters from the corner in which she had been established.

A few friends saw her and nodded, sometimes with a look of surprise or amazement in their eyes.

Her companion gave his orders to the servants as if he were accustomed to being obeyed; and he was very careful that his small charge should have everything she wanted.

"And now what will you do? I'm entirely at your orders!" he said, as they stood once more in the crowded terrace-walk, and watched the animated groups before them. "Will you be reduced to a cinder, playing tennis in the scorching sun? will you tear your dress to pieces play-

ing golf in the rough parts of the park? or will you come for a walk in the shadiest of woods, where we can chat at our ease with no one to bother us."

"The last, please," she said, eagerly, without an idea that there was anything in the proposal to make a chaperon lift up her hands or shake her head in dismay.

"Do tell me who is that man with the black beard?" she asked, with her blue eyes fixed with sudden interest on a very tall man, with an ashen pale face, a slight well-knit figure, and an expression of defiant strength in every line of his features.

"That man is my enemy—Mark Levasseur"—a dark shadow crossing his face.

"Your enemy?" she said, slowly; "have you ever done him any harm?"

"Tother way up," he said with a bitter smile.

"He has tried to ruin my life. But here we both are," with a sudden change of tone, "meeting like the best of friends at Lady Trefusis's garden party. Now for the woods!"

## CHAPTER II.

MR. WOLF.

It was very delightful to get into the delicious coolness of green shade, after the fierce bright sunshine in the garden, to pass from the noise and the crowding, into the sweet silent loveliness where the frequent song of a bird was the only sound to break the stillness.

He made her sit on a sloping bank, and then he lay down amongst the flowers and ferns at her feet, looking up into her face with his grave dark eyes.

"What are you thinking of?" she asked, presently, as she looked up from the wild flowers she was gathering, and found his gaze still fixed upon her.

"Do you want me to tell you the truth?"

"Certainly," with a little nod.

"That it was rather nice to be sitting out here with a girl who knows nothing of me. You've never even asked me my name!"

"No, what is it?" with eager curiosity.

"I shan't tell you," with a slight smile; "but you may call me 'Wolf.'"

"Very well, Mr. Wolf. Have you known Lord and Lady Trefusis all your life?"

"I have known him off and on; but they haven't been married more than ten years. But I'm an unpleasant subject," breaking off suddenly.

"Tell me everything about yourself. You've come out to-day—you see I know something about it—and you are to go in to-morrow. Isn't that it?"

"I didn't want to come out."

"Shall I take you home at once?" with pretended alacrity.

"Not for the world. I'm enjoying myself ever so much."

"You've sat in a wood before, I suppose?"

"Yes, but not such a wood as this," looking round with fervent admiration.

"You've had a companion before?"

"Yes, but not quite like you," breaking into a laugh as she thought of the contrast between this good-looking young man and her grey-haired governess.

"No, I could take my oath to that," he said, with sudden gravity.

The next moment he asked her if she would like to see the most desolate spot in the world; and she stood up at once to show her readiness, having the spirit of adventure strong upon her.

He led the way through the heart of the wood, where there was scarcely any path at all, but he held back the brambles for her, and took as much care of her as possible.

After a long time they came to a gate in the fence, which he unlocked with a key which he took out of his pocket; and again, after crossing a shrubbery, they emerged on to what had once been a close-shaven lawn, but had now the appearance of being reserved for a hay-crop. And beyond the lawn, half surrounded by trees, was the most picturesque place by way of a

domicile that mortal eyes had ever seen. It was low and spacious, only two storeys high, with a broad, castellated front, and large windows, with creepers hanging half over them, like the hair of a Skye terrier hiding its bright eyes.

It was a home which any man might have loved, and yet it had been ruthlessly left to ruin and decay. The garden was nothing but a tangled wilderness, where every bush and plant was striving to usurp the place of another, where roses were choked by syringas, and syringas by lilac-bushes, where geraniums struggled after the light through the leaves of foliage-plants, and tall, white lilies stood up in gentle protestation against the cruel neglect of years.

"Oh, what a lovely place!" exclaimed Lillian; "but oh, how terribly sad!"

"Yes, isn't it ghastly? What would you do if that were your home?"

"I should break my heart," she said, with a little shudder; and then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, she said quickly, "no, I shouldn't. What would be the good of that? I would not let it be in such a fearful state. I would come here every day, and work. If I could get no one to help me, I would work alone, and I should do some good, I know I should."

He looked at her—the slight figure full of life and energy, the small, lovely face bright with resolution.

She was at the beginning of her life, and he felt as if he were at the further end of his, though only six-and-twenty years had passed over his head.

She had not known the weariness of waiting, the chill of disappointment, the fret of constant opposition, the sickness of deferred hope. Her feet stood in the sunshine, as he stood once, with all the hopes of boyhood bubbling over in his heart; but he had gone on for mile after mile, and had reached the shade where no sunbeams could reach him.

"Oh, yes, you would dig up a weed or two with great energy; but where would be the use if the walls of the house were giving way, and the roof absolutely falling in?"

She looked at the building with grave eyes.

"Couldn't you pay somebody to—to mend it?"

"It would never have come to such a state if I had been allowed to touch it. I would turn on a hundred workmen to-morrow, but that odious wretch stands in the way."

"But it is yours—you said it was just now. I should push him aside and do what I wanted; nobody should prevent me."

"I would knock him down with the greatest pleasure," smiling rather grimly, "but, unfortunately, there are other things as well, which could not come within the compass of a blow from the shoulder."

Lillian was much puzzled, but she did not like to ask too many questions, as a sudden gloom seemed to have descended on her companion.

He took her back through the gate in the fence, and they went through the woods almost in silence; but presently he stopped, leant against a tree, and sighed.

"There will be a hue-and-cry after you, I suppose, if I keep you here any longer?"

"Nobody will miss me," she said simply, for she was accustomed to being quite unimportant.

He smiled, and the smile seemed to alter the whole character of his face.

"I shall call you 'Eureka,'" he said quietly.

"Miss Woodville is too stiff; your Christian name would be too impertinent. Will Eureka sit down for another five minutes?"

He threw off his gloom as he took his place beside her on the bank, and talked to her more interestingly than any one had ever talked before.

The time passed very rapidly, and they might have been sitting there till darkness came to warn them of approaching night, if he had not pulled out his watch to show her what a curiosity it was, and caught sight of the time at the same moment.

He sprang to his feet, with an exclamation of dismay.

"We must run for our lives," he said hastily.

"The collation—dinner—whatever they call it—"



is to be solemnly consumed at seven o'clock, and we have exactly five minutes to get there."

"Oh, what will mother say?" she cried, in alarm, for she thought this grand dinner was a solemn affair, at which it would be perfectly disgraceful to be late.

He smiled with evident amusement,—

"No one will say any thing if we slip in quietly. Come along, and I will take you a short cut."

After a hurried scramble through the end of the wood, an absolute run down a shrubbery, they cut off an angle of the garden, and pushing open a glass-door, he ushered her into the long saloon where the guests were already taking their seats at a table adorned with all that was best in flowers, and glass, and silver, and laden with innumerable dainties.

For one minute Lillian found herself next door to her mother. Mrs. Woodville said anxiously, "Good gracious, child! where have you been all this while? We've been looking for you every where!"

"All right, mother," she said quietly. "Lady Trefusis's cousin has taken such care of me."

"If I had only known it, I should have been quite comfortable," with a sigh of relief. "I think we had better take our places here."

But Mr. Wolf had no intention of planting Lillian under her mother's wing. He whisked her off immediately to the other end of the room, where he came suddenly upon Lady Trefusis, who looked from one to the other with an expression of positive dismay.

Before she could say anything, however, he laid his hand upon her sleeve, and put his good-looking face close to hers—

"Let me have her for one evening, I shall never get such a chance again."

"But what would Trefusis say? I really must ask him," in genuine anxiety.

"Don't ask anybody. Let us alone—there's a good soul!" entreatingly.

She shook her head, but with a relenting smile,—

"Take care of her, then," and she added in a whisper, "and for goodness sake don't let her mother know."

"Why should George get all the plums?"

"Because he is safe, and you are absolutely the reverse—I really think—"

But before she could utter the thought, he had vanished into the crowd, taking Lillian with him, and with infinite precaution he placed her at a little table close behind the Countess's chair, where no one could accuse them of being out of the way, but where they were almost entirely removed from public observation.

There they enjoyed themselves immensely, but Lady Trefusis had rightly dubbed her cousin "dangerous," for although no word was said by him that might not have been shouted from the house-tops, Lillian was entirely subjugated by the strange charm that he possessed.

There was such a crowd in the room where she went to take off her hat, and smooth her hair, that she only came across her sisters for a minute. They were eager in their inquiries as to how she had enjoyed herself, and Fanny asked if the cousin had looked after her well.

"Splendidly, thanks."

"Nice boy?" carelessly.

"Very"—emphatically—"if you call him a boy."

"Lady Trefusis said he was a good boy, with not a spice of harm in him," Agnes said cheerfully, without an idea that her hostess had been talking of somebody who was quite a different sort of individual to Mr. Wolf.

### CHAPTER III.

#### "SAVE HIM!"

THE dancing, the music, everything seemed enchanting to Lillian Woodville, and she felt as if she were lost in a dream of delight. Mr. Wolf, she was sure, danced better than anyone ever did before, and every waltz was more charming than the last.

Lady Trefusis beckoned him away from her

just as the last strains of "La Plus Belle" were sounding. He placed her on a seat on one of the large windows, and asking her to wait for him, carefully drew a curtain in front of her, so as to hide her from the general public.

Almost directly two gentlemen came and stood there to enjoy a chat. One was Admiral Fairfax, a kindly, cheery sailor, the other a Mr. Lawson, who had lately taken a place in the neighbourhood. He was saying as he leant against the wall—

"Do tell me the truth about that young fellow who looks like a Spanish desperado, but is said to be an English swell. Is he the genuine article, or a detestable impostor?"

"If you ask me, I'll say 'the genuine article,' but Levasseur will tell you quite the reverse."

"That's one in his favour, for Levasseur is a fearful liar," Lawson said slowly. "Didn't he run away from home, and turn up just as the other man was going to seize everything?"

"Yes, never saw a man more completely sold in my life," the Admiral said, with a chuckle. "I don't blame the boy for running away. Old Wolferton was a drunken brute, who led his wife an awful life, and when she died the boy's last tie to his home was broken."

"Wasn't there a romantic story about a girl in Australia?" Mr. Lawson persisted.

The Admiral rubbed his chin.

"Boys will be boys," he said with another chuckle, "I believe it was something of this sort. Somebody set fire to the judge's house, and young Wolferton saved his daughter at the risk of his own life."

"And the young lady was inconveniently grateful?"

"Wanted to marry him straight off—thinking that she was mightily condescending. But Wolferton wasn't born yesterday, and he came away."

"I've heard quite another version," observed Mr. Lawson, "but I expect yours is the true one. Pity that the old place is allowed to go to rack and ruin."

"All Levasseur's fault. He disputes the claim, and till some missing papers turn up it can't be proved. Shame to keep a youngster out of his own, just for the sake of a quibble. But Levasseur always was a brute. I suppose it is because of the lies that he has spread that all the old ladies fight shy of Wolferton?"

"Yes, confound him! Thanks to him a few idiots take Wolferton to be an impostor."

"Perhaps he is," Mr. Lawson said with a laugh; and then the two friends moved off.

The next moment, Mr. Wolf came back looking very much annoyed.

"Constance insists that you've had too much of me already—is it true?" he said, irritably.

"Oh! why does she want to take you away?"

He smiled at the evident distress in the fresh young voice.

"It comes to this," he said, looking down into her upturned face with his grave, dark eyes.

"Would you rather stay here without me, or banish yourself to the garden with me? Tell me frankly."

"Let us come," and she stood up at once in her eagerness.

"You can have as many partners as you wish; the band is just striking up a delicious waltz—out in the garden you may find it dull."

"No, the garden is ever so much the best," she said, quietly; not knowing that by that answer she was deciding the fate of her life.

"Then we must fly, or the enemy will be upon us."

They slipped out of the window and hurried on over the dewy lawn, till they reached the welcome shadow of the shrubbery. He stopped under a great bush of syringa, and looked at her anxiously,—

"It is not wise, Eureka, to throw your lot in with me. Go back, if you like, it isn't a bit too late."

"I wouldn't go back for anything," she said, energetically.

"But I don't know if it is fair or honest," he said, doubtfully. "They call me all sorts of names—a fraud, an impostor. They want to take my name, my home, everything from me."

"Then you are the boy who ran away!" she exclaimed, eagerly. "And you saved a girl's life, and—and she wanted to marry you," stammering slightly, "and you came back just when Mr. Levasseur didn't want you?"

"Who told you all this?" the colour mounting to his pale cheeks.

"Two gentlemen were talking about it just in front of me; but I never thought you were the 'the boy.'"

"I saw them. I thought they'd never move off. One was old Fairfax, who'd be sure to stand up for me." He remained silent for some time, as if thinking deeply, but after a while he gave an impatient sigh.

"Well, you know the truth now. I did run away, for my life was a perfect hell upon earth. I led a rough sort of life out there; but I give you my honour that I did nothing to be ashamed of. I hurried home some time after my father's death. Levasseur declared that I wasn't myself, and I found great difficulty in proving that I was. The fight is still going on for the old Grange. My father left everything to Levasseur, who was his nephew; but Mr. Benson, our dear old rector, tells me that on his death-bed his feelings were softened towards me—that in consequence of a dream that he had he was convinced that I was alive, and that he made another will in my favour. Mr. Crick, his solicitor, says that he perfectly remembers drawing up that will, but no one can find it."

"But it must be found!" Lillian cried, excitedly.

"I've almost given up hope," he said, dolefully.

"Meanwhile the dear old place is going to absolute ruin. Levasseur won't lay out a penny on it, because, he says, that it may come to me, and I can't because it isn't mine."

"What a scandalous shame!" with vivid sympathy.

"But never mind the past—the present is the only thing that matters to-night—the question of 'you and me.' Eureka," his voice softening, "I don't want to give you up."

"What do you mean?" looking up into his face with startled eyes.

He stooped towards her with his most winning smile.

"It can't do any harm, can it, if we are friends for to-day, and never again—friends—nothing more—only good comrades? You'll go back to your old life none the worse and none the better for having given these few hours to me. We've been very happy together, haven't we?"

She had not the least suspicion of the scruples which were troubling his mind with regard to her innocent self. His words filled her with a sort of vague impatience. She had settled to come with him, and that was enough.

"Why can't we be happy without talking so much about it?" she asked, with a little frown.

"Hush!"

He put his finger to his lips, and drew her gently towards him behind the trunk of a tree.

They were very close together, her bright hair touching the tip of his close-shaven chin; but he dared not move, for only a few feet from them was Mark Levasseur, walking quickly, and, as it seemed, rather stealthily down the shrubbery.

"I wonder what he is up to," Mr. Wolf said in a whisper. "Do you mind staying here whilst I go and see?"

"I'll come with you," she said decidedly, not relishing the idea of being left behind whilst something exciting was about to happen.

"Then, for Heaven's sake, don't make a sound!"

She was careful as she could be, holding up her skirts and stepping noiselessly over fallen leaves, &c.

To Mr. Wolf's surprise, Levasseur pursued his way through the wood to the gate in the fence, which he unlocked, just as he had done it himself, with a key out of his pocket, and left ajar. They slipped through it, and stood again on the edge of the uncut lawn, in front of the desolate Grange.

Mark Levasseur was nowhere to be seen, but the moonlight fell softly on the grey walls and

the hanging creepers, and the whole place looked absolutely lovely.

Every defect—the progress of ruin, the ravage of time—were all hidden by the charitable shadows of the night, whilst to every beauty was given a new charm.

Sitting on a seat, side by side, with the silence of the night wrapping them round, the two who had come to watch remained to talk, but in cautious undertones.

"I always carry this about with me," pulling out a small pocket-pistol, relic of his rough life in the bush. "Even in sober England I can't cure myself of the habit."

"Is it loaded?" she asked in an awe-struck tone.

"Yes, but don't be afraid of it. It won't go off," putting it into her small, ungloved hand.

"And how do you fire it?"

"Like this."

And he showed her how to cock and uncock it.

"If that brute weren't somewhere about—by Jove! there he is!" he exclaimed suddenly as a light appeared in one of the upper rooms.

There was no shutter to the room, and the man's tall form was plainly visible to the four eyes which were watching him with the utmost interest.

"He must be looking for the will," she whispered excitedly; "and if he finds it, he is certain sure to destroy it."

"But every part of the house has been searched over and over again, and Mrs. Parton, who takes care of the place, is always looking for it. He can't know anything about it; but I'm sure he's up to some mischief."

"Then go to him. Look! he is doing something to the wall!"

"But how can I leave you?" longing to go, and yet with a strong feeling that he ought to stay and take care of her.

It was perfectly maddening to look on without any attempt at interference, but he tried to resist the temptation. On the other hand, she was conscious that if she had not insisted upon coming with him, his actions would have been quite unhampered; and she urged him so strongly to go, threatening to go instead if he would not stir, that at last he ran off, promising to return as soon as possible.

He disappeared at once into the bushes, and it seemed a very long time to the lonely girl before he appeared in the one lighted room.

There was a broad space of moonlit grass in front of her, but beyond that the shadows were very dark, and she began to fancy that she saw groping forms amongst the drooping branches. If anyone sprang out upon her, and tried to rob her, would there be the smallest chance of her voice reaching Mr. Wolf in the recesses of the Grange?

She thought not, but she threw back her head and tried to be brave; and the next moment, she forgot all about her own perils in thinking of another's.

There was Mr. Wolf in the room, and the other man seemed to turn fiercely upon him. What they were saying of course it was impossible to know; but she saw Mark Levasseur throw himself upon Mr. Wolf like a furious tiger. The two forms swayed backwards and forwards in a fierce tussle, which might easily end in death for one of them.

The poor girl watched them breathlessly, her heart almost standing still with terror. Mr. Wolf was neither so strong nor so powerful as his enemy; and could she stand there to see him killed before her eyes, without lifting a finger to help him?

There was no time to run back to the Castle, the last fatal blow might be given long before she reached the end of the wood. The precious moments were flying—one minute more and the man who had been so very kind to her might be dead!

She sprang forward on to the wet grass, looking upward with agonized eyes. She could see that Levasseur was getting the better of Wolf, though the latter was fighting desperately. Suddenly she thought of the pistol, which she was still holding unconsciously in her hand.

If she fired it off, even if she did not try to hit

anything, the loud report might startle Levasseur, and make him think that somebody was coming. She could no longer see the two struggling forms, but she had no doubt that they were still there. Remembering all the directions that Wolf had given her so shortly before, she raised the pistol, and, aiming straight at the window, fired.

The noise of the report startled birds from their nests, and woke the sleeping echoes.

A scream came from some corner of the Grange, but after a while there was deep, appalling silence.

That scream could not have come from either of the two men. Perhaps the shot had roused Mrs. Parton from her first sleep. Oh! if she had thought of her before, she would have gone to her and implored her to interfere.

What was happening now?

She was trembling all over, but her anxiety overpowered every other feeling as she went close up to the house, and listened.

Perfect silence! Nobody seemed to be moving in that one lighted room. Mr. Wolf would surely come to her as soon as he could. The two men could not be there without exchanging a word, or moving hand or foot.

If Mr. Levasseur had gone there could be no reason to keep Mr. Wolf there—unless he were hurt and incapable of moving.

When that thought crossed her mind, it obliterated every other consideration. Without a thought of what might happen to herself, she ran round the corner of the house, and coming to an open door, dashed into it, and down a passage till she came to a stair-case.

As she mounted it breathlessly, an uncertain step came down the stairs above her head, and she looked up in dread, expecting to see Levasseur; but a woman met her face to face on the landing—a woman with a scared face, a night-cap tied over her grey hair, and an old red dressing-gown thrown over her unfastened alpacas dress.

"What's going on here?" she asked, in a voice that was hoarse with fright, as she stared at Lilian with wide, open eyes, scarcely certain that the lovely girl, with her bright hair and pale blue dress, was not an apparition.

"Mr. Levasseur has been here," Lilian began; but without waiting to say anything more in her great impatience, she stepped inside the wide, open door of the front room, and looked round with eager eyes which yet were afraid of what they might see.

Then, with a low cry of pain and horror, she dropped down on her knees, for there on the floor lay the man whom she called "Mr. Wolf," with a dark stream coming from some wound in his chest, staining the whiteness of his shirt-front.

Her chest heaved with tearless sobs as she bent over him. His eyes were closely shut; his dark lashes looked black as ink on the deathly whiteness of his cheeks, and there was no sign of life or breath in the motionless lips.

Mrs. Parton laid her hand upon her shoulder.

"Levasseur has murdered him! He shall hang for it—the villain!" she said, fiercely, and then she began to cry pitifully, for she had loved this man as a boy, better than anything else in the world.

"But we must save him," Lilian cried, waking up from her first stupor. "We must stop the bleeding. But how to do it?"

Mrs. Parton went to her room and fetched some towels, by means of which she made a sort of tourniquet, and bandaging it closely over the wound, stopped the flow of blood to a certain extent.

Some cold water was next brought, and Lilian, with her poor shaky hands, bathed the broad white forehead. As she put the sponge into the basin she looked up and saw that the wall had been strangely defaced, as if it had been violently struck—so violently that a hole had been made in it. As she was looking at it in puzzled but half-unconscious surprise, a voice said, softly,—

"Eureka!"

Oh! what a throb of joy and thankfulness went through her troubled heart at the sound of that voice once more! She stooped over him with a look in her blue eyes such as a mother's

might have worn when gazing down with infinite tenderness at her sick child.

"Are you better?" she said, softly.

His first thought was for her—this girl whom he had taken into his charge. He must shield her from all blame—all possibility of scandal—but how to do this when this deadly faintness was upon him?

## CHAPTER IV.

### "HALF-MURDERED!"

"Go back to the Castle," he said, very low—so low that she had to bend her head close to his white face in order to catch the words. "Don't let anyone know where you have been. Find Trefusa. Tell him that I've had an accident. He will know what to do."

The heavy lids dropped over the heavy eyes, and he seemed as if he were slipping back again into utter unconsciousness. How could she leave him to die all alone!

"Mrs. Parton shall dress herself quickly and go—won't you?" turning to the kindly caretaker, who had been an old servant in Mr. Wolf's family.

"No—no—yes. I will get up and crawl there myself if you stay another minute!" by the strength of his urgent desire overpowering his sense of growing weakness.

He tried to raise himself on his elbow, and looked at her anxiously.

"Your dress isn't stained. Oh, child, don't you see that if I've done you harm, I shall never have another happy moment!" his whole heart in his weak voice and anxious eyes. "Go at once."

"You had better do as his Lordship wishes," Mrs. Parton said, sensibly; "and your young legs will get along quicker than my old ones; and the sooner a doctor sees to him the more chance the poor dear has of recovery."

Lilian rose from her knees reluctantly. Something seemed to tell her that she was losing Mr. Wolf for ever—that never again would he be the kind friend to her that he had been that night.

He would go back to his world and forget that they had ever met. She would go back to her quiet life, and this one evening would be like a star in her memory for ever. "Good-bye," she said, and she heaved a deep sigh.

There was no answer to that gentle farewell in the sweet young voice, for again the lids dropped over the tired eyes, and a ghastly whiteness spread over the handsome face.

At the sight of it she forgot her own self once again, and her only thought was to get help for him as soon as possible.

She ran down the stairs and out into the darkness without the slightest fear, made her way with some difficulty to the gate, which had fortunately been left ajar, and then on through the wood with the speed of a deer.

The brambles caught her frail dress and tore it here and there, now that there was no friendly hand to hold them back; but she sped on caring for nothing so long as she reached her end by the quickest way.

It seemed a very long way indeed now that she was alone, and in such dreadful haste; but, at last, she reached the shrubbery. Panting hard she stopped for one moment by the syringa, where they two had stood before.

There were a few couples still walking about the gardens, so she could not keep up the same rate of speed for fear of being taken for a lunatic, and she kept out of sight as much as possible in order to avoid inconvenient questions.

She only slipped behind a rose-bush in time to escape an astonished stare from Fanny, who was standing by the edge of the lawn, and saying to a partner,—

"I think we can't go any farther as it is getting so late. My mother will be waiting for me."

Oh, if they were all ready to go home—the carriage waiting at the door—and she missing! What would become of her?

Urged on by so many motives she dashed in at the first open window, and found herself in a beautifully-furnished room which looked like a



library, for the walls were covered with bookshelves.

In the next window there was a large writing-table, in front of which sat a man with a fair beard, who was staring at her with an expression of amused amazement.

"By Jove!" he ejaculated, with a little laugh as he looked at the dishevelled figure which had burst in upon him so unexpectedly, when he had slipped away from his social duties to write an important telegram to be sent off the first thing the next morning.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, Lord Trefusis," she began, breathlessly; "but—"

"So it's my little friend, is it? Delighted to see you," getting up from his chair and taking both her trembling little hands in his. "Come and have a chat!"

A chat when life or death might hang on the speed she made!

"I've no time," she said, pantingly. "Mr. Wolf is dying—at least half-murdered—and he sent me to tell you."

"Mr. Wolf! I know no one of that name; but I'm sorry if anything has happened to him," looking extremely puzzled. "Where is he?"

"He's at the Grange. He's your own cousin, so you must know him. Oh! do come and save him!" looking up into his kind face with a wild entreaty in her eyes.

"My cousin! Never heard of the fellow! Jove! you can't mean Wolferton!" as a light suddenly broke in upon his perplexity.

"He told me to call him Wolf, and he has been so very good to me," earnestly.

"It must be Wolferton. But what on earth have you been up to with him?"

"Nothing,"—too much occupied with the remembrance of his present deplorable condition to think of anything so puerile as a blush—"only it was my very first party, and Lady Trefusis asked him most kindly to take care of me."

"Asked Wolferton? Impossible. She would never have thought of such a thing!"

"But indeed she did. She told my mother—"

"And Mrs. Woodville didn't faint?"

"No, she never faints."

"And he was so very charming! And you've lost your heart to him entirely!"

"Nothing of the sort!" indignantly, as a lovely pink spread at last over the paleness of her frightened face. "But oh, Lord Trefusis," her voice changing, the tears rushing into her eyes, " whilst we are talking here he is bleeding to death!"

"Good Heavens. I thought it was a joke. Wolferton's always in one scrape as soon as he's out of another. Tell me quietly what has happened!"

He made her sit down on a sofa whilst she told him everything.

When she mentioned Mr. Levasseur's name he became very grave and listened intently, a dark frown gathering on his usually placid face.

"I never trusted Levasseur, but I didn't suppose he would ever take to personal violence," he said, after a short pause. "But look here, my dear child, don't tell a soul what you've been through to-night, on any account. You would never hear the last of it."

"But I've done nothing wrong!" looking at him in her turn, with puzzled eyes.

"No, no, of course not. My wife understands all that sort of thing better than I do. I'll take you to her at once."

"But never mind about me," she entreated, in her great anxiety. "He is so bad, so very bad. If we hadn't gone to him, Mrs. Parton said he must have died."

"Yes, but she saw to him, so there is no immediate danger. Wolferton would agree with me that you are much more important at this moment. He would never forgive himself if you came to any harm. Come along."

"But won't you send for a doctor?" following her host reluctantly.

"There is one in the house. My poor child," looking kindly down into her anxious face, "don't you worry your little head any more about Wolferton. I'll order the break and go down in it to fetch him up here; and when he is safely housed, I'll look after him as if I were his father, or his

brother, whichever you prefer. But my advice to you is,—forget him as fast as you can."

Forget him! Just what Mr. Wolf himself had said.

Why were they all so desperately anxious that she should forget the only man who had ever interested her?

She walked on without a word, smoothing back her ruffled hair, and trying to hide the disasters to her pretty blue frock, as she recollected that she would have to meet her mother's inquiring eyes, and yet too much engrossed with the tragic scene so lately enacted at the Grange, to have much regard for her own personal appearance.

Lady Trefusis was standing in the drawing-room surrounded by her guests, who were mostly intent on taking leave; but when her husband whispered in her ear,—

"Constance, I want to speak to you," she made some smiling excuse to her friends, and slipped away into the conservatory.

The moment her eye fell upon Lillian Woodville's white face, she felt a pang of great anxiety.

"What is it? What has happened?" she asked, quickly. "For heavens sake, don't keep me in suspense!"

Lord Trefusis told the story as briefly as he could, but her face grew very grave as she listened.

"My poor child! what you have been through!" she exclaimed, as she drew Lillian towards her and kissed her compassionately. "Dr. Adair will see to Wolferton at once, and bring him here; but you must be our first consideration. I wouldn't have had this happen for ten thousand pounds!"

"But if Dr. Adair goes to him at once, and manages to cure him," Lillian began, when the Countess interrupted her.

"Yes, but you. Don't you see that without the greatest care the story will be all over the country, and I shall never be able to look Mrs. Woodville in the face again."

"But, indeed, you promised that your cousin should take care of me—and mother was quite satisfied,"—looking at her troubled face in surprise.

"Yes, and he has never been near you," she exclaimed tragically, to Lillian's immense astonishment. "George Westwood, a good, innocent boy, who would have watched over you like a sheep-dog, was to have been with you the whole time. Instead of which, Wolferton, the last man I should have picked out as the guardian of a young, romantic girl, takes possession of you, and of course drags you into one adventure after another."

"He took the greatest care of me, and I would rather have had him than anyone else in the world," Lillian said proudly, with a sudden light in her eyes, a sudden flush on her cheeks, which made Lady Trefusis know that her worst fears were confirmed.

"Of course you would, my dear. He is too utterly charming," she said dryly; "and I haven't a word to say against him. But I wish with all my heart that you had never met."

"He said it would not matter to anybody if we were friends for one day, and never again," Lillian said in a low voice, with her eyes bent on a white lily.

"Oh, he said that, did he? What a marvel of prudence! I quite agree with him. But now—a bright idea! I'll send for George, and save the situation," the Countess said with a smile.

Her husband had already gone to order the carriage and to speak to the doctor.

"May I run upstairs and fetch my hat?" Lillian suggested, as she felt sure that her mother must be ready to go.

"Mind you rejoin me here, and the errors of this fatal day may be retrieved."

"But, Lady Trefusis,"—stopping at the door which led into the corridor, and looking back over her shoulder with wistful eyes,— "you will let me know how he is? for I shall be so anxious."

"Will that help you to forget him?"—with a doubtful smile, as she thought what a pretty picture the girl made standing there amongst the flowers—the fairest of them all.

"If he forgets me—that is all that is necessary." And with a little sigh she turned away.

"Will he forget her? That is the question," Lady Trefusis said to herself, with a shrug of her shoulders. "He must be made of very odd stuff if he does."

## CHAPTER V.

"TELL ME THAT HE WON'T DIE!"

"AGNES, have you seen Lillian?" Mrs. Woodville asked querulously, for it was high time to be off, and the youngest member of their party was still missing.

"No, mother; not for a long while,"—thoughtfully, as she began to think over the past hours. "You see, there was dancing in two rooms; and she always seemed to be in the one whilst I was in the other."

"Captain Parker told me that she had made a complete conquest of Lord Trefusis's cousin," Fanny said with a little laugh. "But I told him that he was quite safe—only a boy—at which, I don't know why, but he looked immensely amused. Oh, here they are!"

"You've been shamefully stolen from me to-day," George Westwood was saying in his pleasant, boyish voice, as he walked by Lillian's side; "but I hope to have my innings another time. It was the clearest case of swindle that I ever came across."

"Not my fault, I assure you," she told him, trying to speak brightly, though she felt limp in spirit as well as body. "How could I tell that he was the wrong cousin, when I did not know there were two?"

"But you must have heard of the other fellow!"

"Never."

"Didn't his name recall anything when you were introduced?" he asked wonderingly.

"Nobody introduced us," she said rather shyly; "he simply told me to call him 'Mr. Wolf.'"

"Oh, that beats anything I ever heard," cried George with a delighted laugh.

But the next moment he looked the personification of gravity as he stood before Mrs. Woodville, and met her searching eye.

"Here is your daughter, Mrs. Woodville," he said with a slight bend of his fair head; "and I hope you will allow that I have taken the greatest care of her."

At any other time Lillian would have been intensely amused at the consummate effrontery of this speech, when his "greatest care" consisted in his conducting her from the foot of the grand staircase into the marble hall, but her whole attention was absorbed by the sight of Mr. Mark Levasseur standing close behind her mother.

There he stood, with a perfectly unruffled shirt-front as well as a perfectly unruffled manner, as if he had never strayed away from that pleasure-loving crowd.

Was that struggle for life or death in the desolate Grange all a dream or an illusion?

He was pale, certainly, but then he had been as pale as he could be when she first saw him in the garden, and Mr. Wolf pointed him out as his enemy.

She darted back to Lady Trefusis, and, putting her hand on her arm, said in an agitated whisper,—

"He is here—the murderer—the man who tried to kill Mr. Wolf!"

"Hush! Not a word. It was a quarrel—not a murder. We don't want a scandal in the family," the Countess whispered hurriedly.

At the same moment the very man whom they were discussing, came up to his hostess and made a request in a low voice. She turned to Lillian with a slight smile about the corners of her well-shaped mouth, and said quietly,—

"Mr. Levasseur wishes to be introduced to you. Mr. Levasseur—Miss Lillian Woodville."

In the first shock of her indignant surprise the girl drew back; but presently, feeling Lady Trefusis's compelling eye upon her, she bent her head two inches, and then walked off with the air of an offended duchess.

Mr. Levasseur's eye followed her with appreciation, as George put her into the carriage.

"The prettiest girl in Blankshire," he said slowly; "but her manners are scarcely up to the mark."

"You have not fascinated her at first sight," the Countess said, with an amused laugh, "and she is too frank to hide her feelings."

"The more she dislikes me to-day, the more she shall like me to-morrow," he said resolutely. "If she had treated me just like anyone else I should not have cared a straw for her. But now——" and a curious smile curved his lips.

The Countess had never liked Mark Levasseur though she had had a high idea of his abilities; but to-night, when he had nearly killed her special favourite, her tolerant aversion had developed into something which was almost intolerant loathing.

"I would not think of her at all," she said coldly. "Mr. Mark Levasseur, the cynical man of the world, with no faith in anything or anybody but himself, is as far removed from my pure little white lily as the north from the south."

"You would not wish me success?" looking at her from under his half-shut lids.

"No, I can promise you that I wouldn't. Poor little girl, I want her to be very happy."

"And why should she not be happy as Mrs. Levasseur?" he asked with a sneer.

"Because Mr. Mark Levasseur would be her husband," she replied, with a triumphant flash in her brilliant eyes. "If you wanted the truth, you have it now."

"Truth seems to be another name for rudeness," and the lines on his forehead deepened into a scowl.

She turned away from him to bid good-bye to the few remaining guests, but she was anxious not to lose sight of him, as she did not know what intentions Lord Trefusis might have concerning him.

He would not be kept, however, but said he must go back to the "Rose and Crown," where he had put up, as he thought he would have to start early in the morning.

"What takes you away so unusually early?" she asked with some curiosity.

"Business, Lady Trefusis," he said laconically, and with a low bow walked determinedly towards the open door.

"One moment," she exclaimed hastily, as if a sudden thought had struck her, though the question she was about to ask had germinated for some time. "Do you know what has become of Wolferton? I have not seen him for ever so long."

Mark Levasseur answered without turning his head. "I don't interest myself about his movements. Good-night."

"Liar and hypocrite!" The Countess murmured the opprobrious words to herself, and then, when he was quite at a safe distance, stepped out into the cool fragrance of the night air and listened attentively. Quickly she caught the sound of wheels, and went back into the hall to await the arrival of Levasseur's victim.

When Lord Wolferton was carefully lifted out of the break and placed upon a mattress which had been brought down for the purpose, she bent over him with a sudden sinking of her heart. It seemed to her as if he were terribly near the jaws of death, and as she looked at the calm beauty of his face, and remembered what a bright, high-spirited boy he had been when he first came over to England to contest his rights, and saw that he looked weak and helpless, as if only fit for the grave, the tears rushed to her bright eyes.

"Tell me that he won't die!" she said appealingly to her husband, who had been with the doctor to fetch him home.

"No, no, Adair thinks he can pull him through," Lord Trefusis said cheerfully.

Slowly and very carefully several footmen lifted the mattress, and carried it towards a bedroom on the ground floor, every footstep sounding markedly on the marble flooring in the deep silence which had supervened on the late noise and bustle of dissipation.

It is strange what an influence some men have over the members of the softer sex. Mrs. Perkins, the house-keeper, who was as fond of her night's rest as most middle-aged people are, was ready to sacrifice it at a moment's notice in order to plant herself by the wounded man's bedside.

She would not trust him to anyone else, for her experienced eye told her that he was in a very precarious state, and that he might easily slip through their fingers if the doctor's directions were not obeyed to the letter.

The Countess felt that she might well trust him to her care; but nevertheless went to bed with a weight of anxiety on her heart such as she had rarely known before.

And poor little Lillian lay on her bed, kept awake by her anxious thoughts as the hours crawled slowly by. She had never seen any one look so ill before as Mr. Wolf when she left him. He seemed to have no strength even to open his eyes; and such a long interval had elapsed since then that he might have grown worse and worse, and actually sunk into the sleep that knows no waking. And then she would turn over with a little gasp, and wonder why she was never to tell any one that she had been to that deserted Grange with him.

She repeated again that she had done nothing to be ashamed of, and tossed from side to side in vain longings for the news that was never likely to come.

He might die, and she would not hear of it till the whole world knew it from the papers; and, on the other hand, he might get perfectly well, and go away, and forget her!

Not a pleasant thought, though, of course, there was no reason why he should ever remember a girl whom he had once, and only once, met at Castle Trefusis!

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE WOULD-BE MURDERER.

MR. MARK LEVASSEUR had one great friend—Lady Mitford—who lived in the same county as the Woodvilles. She was a woman who prided herself on her intellect, and chose her friends rather amongst the clever people of the world than the grandees.

She was persuaded that Levasseur would one day be a great man, and she meant to attach herself, to a certain degree, to the rising sun. So she was very glad to welcome him to Mitford Hall whenever he chose to run down from London, and was always willing to grant any request of his, if it did not clash with her own desires.

But when he asked her if she knew the Woodvilles, and suggested that the youngest daughter looked such a white-faced child, that a change to the bracing air at the top of Fordingbridge would be sure to do her good, she drew her brows together ominously, for she knew that "the white-faced child" was a girl whom any one might admire.

"What do you want her here for? to flirt with her?" she asked sharply.

"No; to get her out of Wolferton's way," he said cunningly. "I know you don't like him any better than I, and you would be rather glad than not to do him a bad turn."

"I don't love him, certainly," with her slow, but cruel, smile. "Is he very much taken with her?"

"I fancy he is; and now that he is laid up at Trefusis Castle, they may have delicious meetings every hour of the day. Curse him!"

It would be very sweet to him if he could win Wolferton's love from him, as well as his estate.

He hated him simply because he had injured him, and this hate had only been quiescent for that brief space of time when he fled in dismay from Falcon Grange, and imagined that he had left his rival dead on the floor in that desolate room.

He had rushed to the inn and changed his things in order that no one might connect him with the tragedy at the Grange, and he had acted his part at the Castle with consummate coolness.

It was only from some scraps of conversation the next day that he gathered that Wolferton was recovering, and also that he had been going it "to any extent with the Woodville girl"; and he was immediately fired with the wish to stop his little game.

He succeeded in inducing his hostess to send the invitation; and when it arrived at Westville there was a grave consultation between the twins and their mother as to whether it should be accepted or not.

Nobody could fail to see that Lillian had looked pale and curiously out of spirits ever since that delightful party at the Castle.

Now Mitford Hall stood on the slope of Fordingbridge Hill, where the air was particularly bracing; and they were sure that it would be the very thing to do her good. They fancied that Lady Mitford lived very quietly, so that no one need imagine that Lillian was introduced because she was allowed to go there.

So, very much against her will, the poor child was packed off, and arrived at the Hall, feeling the loneliest little being in the world.

The room was full of people when she first appeared, and Lady Mitford, a tall woman, with a strong-minded manner and a handsome face, was cold in her greeting, though very polite.

To tell the truth, she was disgusted to find how very pretty Lillian Woodville looked, though only in a sailor-hat and a simple travelling-dress; and, at the first glance, she distrusted Levasseur's motives concerning her.

She gave her some tea, remarked on the heat of the day and the disgusting amount of dust, and then turned away, feeling that she had done all that could be expected of her.

When she was feeling particularly forlorn, for many people were staring at her, but few talking to her, up came Sir Thomas Mitford, a cheery little man, nearly as broad as he was long.

He asked her where she came from, and why she had come, in the oddest manner, questions which she answered frankly, to his great amusement.

She told him that she lived at Westville, and that she had come because she had been made to come.

"And you would like to go back by the next train?" he asked, with a twinkle in his eye, as he handed her some delicious cake—remembering that he used to like such things when he was young, and knew nothing about the gout.

She gave a little nod of hearty assent.

"That is only because you are new to it," he said, reassuringly. "Don't let the men make too much of you, and you'll get all the women on your side,"—sagacious advice which a pretty girl rarely follows.

"Fond of horses?" he asked presently, as the party began to break up, and most of the guests streamed through the wide open windows out into the garden. "Then come and have a look round the stables. They tell me that Deademon has something the matter with her fetlock, and I want to see about it."

Lillian was not a grasping girl as to her amusements, and she was quite happy dawdling about the stables with the chatty Baronet, and paying a visit to all the horses in turn.

Whilst she was thus occupied Mr. Mark Levasseur came down from town and stood for some time on the gravel path outside the drawing-room windows, scanning the lawn with a searching eye. There were several girls playing tennis with great vigour, and beyond the boundaries of the lawn, where the ground was rough and uneven, he could descry another party playing golf, but he could take his oath that Miss Lillian Woodville was not amongst them.

He wandered about restlessly till he came upon Lady Mitford, who chose to give him a rather cooler greeting than usual, because she guessed, with the quickness of jealousy, that he was dying to hear something about that absurd little Woodville girl.

Even when he asked a direct question she could give him no satisfactory information. Miss Woodville had arrived,—a fact that he knew already—but as to her present whereabouts she could say nothing.

So it came to pass that Lillian was in blissful ignorance concerning his presence in the house, until she found him by her side in the long drawing-room. She shrank as if she had seen a boa-constrictor coming towards her, and only bowed in the coldest manner; for it struck her



as something too terrible that she was here under the same roof with Mr. Wolf's enemy.

"Allow me to give you a word of advice, Miss Woodville," he said in his cold, half-answering tone. "Hide your dislike as you would your liking, and never make an enemy unless you can't help it."

"I am not in the least afraid of you, Mr. Levasseur," she said with great boldness, for her heart was beating fast with indignation.

"No, a pretty girl knows her own power; but is there nobody else in whom you are interested? Can't you be afraid for him?" He fixed his eyes upon her face as he spoke, and saw a wave of colour pass over it.

She would have given anything to turn round upon Levasseur and call him a "would-be murderer" to his face, but Lady Trefusis had written to her privately, but most urgently, to keep all that had transpired at the Grange, and especially the fact of her own presence there, a dead secret from everybody, so that she dared not allude to it.

"I only came out the other day, and I've never indulged in a flirtation," she said, quietly.

"Then report tells a heap of lies about you and somebody else at Castle Trefusis," watching her closely, for he knew absolutely nothing about it, and wanted to gather all he could from her expression.

Remembering all that had happened, and forgetting that it had been kept as secret as possible, instead of the blush which he had expected, she turned as white as her dress, and had quite a scared look in her eyes.

He was completely taken aback by the effect he had produced, but just then a Captain Armstrong gave his arm to Lilian, and led her in the wake of most of the other ladies into the dining-room, and he had to hurry up to another lady who was looking daggers at him for being so late. But he could not get Lilian out of his thoughts as he puzzled over that look on her sweet, young face.

How much did she know? or, rather, how much did she guess? for it was not likely that a young thing like that would have a family secret confided to her? If Wolferton had been carried back to the Castle before the party broke up, and when there, had been able to explain how he came by his wound, then he could have understood that the Woodvilles might hear of it as well as other people; but he had heard from a source that he could trust, that Wolferton was unconscious when he was brought in, and that all the guests had left the Castle some time before he arrived. Constance Trefusis was a chatterbox, but she could scarcely be such a goose as not to keep a guard on her tongue when such important interests were involved! The doubt in his mind invested Lilian with a new interest, and his eyes were fixed upon her in a way that excited his hostess's jealousy.

There was dancing in the evening, and to Lady Mitford's disgust men were always worrying her to introduce them to Miss Woodville.

In her simple white surah, trimmed with a frill of lace on the skirt and round the edge of the low bodice, Lilian cut out all the other women, though many of them blazed with jewels and most of them were very smart.

Nothing would induce her to dance with Mark Levasseur.

She refused him point-blank without troubling herself to give an excuse, in a way that no one else in that crowded room would have dared to do. Her refusal incensed him; but her pluck won his unwilling admiration.

## CHAPTER VII.

### AN ENORMOUS SACRIFICE.

DURING the next few days Lilian Woodville was driven nearly wild. Morning, noon, and evening, Mark Levasseur pursued her with his attentions.

If she were cold as ice to him or hot with the fire of her wrath, it made no difference, he would still place her chair, pick up her handkerchief, supply her with flowers, &c.

This conduct amused all the rest of the guests, and Captain Armstrong chaffed her continually about "her devoted admirer," and Sir Thomas asked when he was going to "pop," till Lady Mitford's anger grew and grew as the days wore on, and she would have politely sent the girl back to Westville if she had not known that Mark Levasseur could see her there as easily as possible.

She thought it was better to have them under her own eye where she could see for herself what was going on, instead of being tortured by doubts as to what might be happening at Westville.

One day when poor Lilian felt that she was at the end of her patience the whole party started for a picnic.

Sir Thomas offered to drive her over in his dog-cart, an offer which she accepted with glee, though Captain Armstrong said it was a "beastly shame," and was only consoled by the sight of the scowl on Levasseur's face.

It was a lovely day, with brilliant sunshine flooding the park, and peeping through the lattice-work of branches overhead as they drove through woods or leafy lanes.

Lilian determined to cast all her cares behind her. She was free from her tormentor, at least for a time, and the brightness of the weather acted upon her spirits.

Sir Thomas was very cheerful, and made her laugh with his quizzical jokes. She was quite sorry when the drive came to an end, though it was in a lovely spot on the slope of a hill.

Captain Armstrong ran forward to help her down, and took possession of her, to her delight, for she was thankful to be taken care of by anybody but her one detested enemy.

Somehow she could never regard Levasseur as anything else, in spite of his devotion. It was always as if he were pretending to be her lover, whilst in reality his hatred was fiercer than hers. That morning she noticed that he was much annoyed by a letter which he received at breakfast.

The colour rushed up into his white face in a way that was very unusual with him, and betokened great emotion.

She saw him thrust the letter into his pocket, and remain silent for some time afterwards, as if its contents had struck him dumb.

It was a letter that concerned Wolferton deeply, and if she had only known its contents she would have been spared much trouble of mind.

The picnic was over, with all its fun and frolic, its bursts of laughter, its execrable jokes, its absurd mistakes, its pronounced flirtations.

Mr. Mark Levasseur had kept his hostess in good temper by devoting himself to her service, but when the party dispersed in twos and threes, he kept his eye steadily on the supple figure in the blue cambric, with the rippling curls of burnished gold appearing under the brim of a sailor-hat.

It was almost enough for her to look at him to send her off into a fit, for he was very comical looking, with a turn-up nose and a ferocious moustache.

Just as they were enjoying themselves immensely their pleasure was spoiled by the sudden appearance of Mark Levasseur.

He brought a message from Lady Mitford to Captain Armstrong, begging him to come to her at once.

He demurred, saying that he was having the honour of escorting Miss Woodville.

"I will go back with you," Lilian rejoined, promptly.

"No, Lady Mitford said she would meet you at the well," Levasseur said, gravely.

"Then don't be a minute, Captain Armstrong, and I'll wait for you here," and she leant against the stem of an oak, to show that she had established herself there for the present.

He gave her a laughing nod, raised his hat, and disappeared.

When they were quite alone, Mark Levasseur stood in front of that slight, girlish figure, and wondered at the storm of passion which was seething in his heart.

"You try to avoid me every hour of the day," he said, slowly, "but let me tell you that this can't go on for ever."

"No, very soon, I shall go home, and then I

shall never see you again," throwing back her head like a young colt longing to be free.

"You forget that Falcon Grange belongs to me, and that I must come every now and then to look after my property."

"You never look after it," with an angry flash in her eyes, as she remembered how he stood between Mr. Wolf and his own home. "It is all tumbling to pieces."

"So you've seen it?" a curious expression coming into his face. "May I ask who had the presumption to take you there?"

She saw in an instant the slip she had made, and would have given much to call the words back; but as that was impossible, she would only give him an evasive answer.

"I did not know that it belonged to you, or nothing would have tempted me inside its door," she said, resentfully.

"Everybody knows it," scornfully. "Really?" raising her eye brows. "I thought it belonged to the last owner's son."

"No doubt you did;" and then his manner softened, and he said in a low voice,—

"I did not come here to discuss disputed properties, I want to tell you that I love you as I never loved anyone before. Can't you give me a little in return, child?"

He held out his hands, but she shrank away from him with a shiver.

"No, why do you ask it?" she said, nervously, for there was something in this man that frightened her, in spite of her usual pluck.

"I ask it because I've come to such a pass that I can't do without it. Lilian, listen to me, I'll make any sacrifice you like in order to obtain it."

She shook her golden head, without even giving a glance in his direction.

Her attitude of complete indifference galled him beyond words; but yet, though his passion for the moment seemed to balance between love and hate, he felt that nothing on earth could induce him to give her up.

"Do you hear? Any sacrifice you like," he repeated. "Falcon Grange is one of the richest estates in England. Its farms are all tenanted, and in a most unusual state of prosperity. I will give all this up to a man whom I regard as an infamous impostor, if you will be my wife."

The colour flew to her face, her heart beat fast and furiously. Was it possible for her, Lilian Woodville, to give back his inheritance to the man who had been so kind to her? Oh, it would be a boundless joy to go to him, and say,—

"Falcon Grange is yours for ever and ever!" Already, in imagination, she stood before him, his dark eyes were looking straight into hers, glowing with delight as he heard those magic words.

Reports had come to her that his health would have mended much faster if he had not been so depressed in mind. Good news would act like a tonic, and it would be she, his little friend of that one forgotten day, who would restore him to health and happiness. Her own cheeks glowed, her eyes brightened, as her heart throbbed with her great delight, her hands clasped, her lips parted, whilst Mark Levasseur watched her with a fierce admiration which surprised himself.

"Come to me," he cried, opening wide his arms, as he thought that her consent was already won; and his heart bounded with a sense of triumph.

But at the sound of his voice her dream vanished, and she was recalled in a moment to a remembrance of the price she would have to pay for it—the awful price!

She shuddered as she saw those outstretched arms, and, as they came nearer and nearer, seized with a childish access of terror, she took to her heels and ran as if for dear life—anywhere, anywhere out of his reach.

On she ran, as if a herd of wild bulls were pursuing her, through the tangled brushwood, under low branches, across tiny currents of water, half hidden by the ferns on their banks—ever on, till she came to a gate, which she passed through without ceremony, and emerged, pant-

ing and without one scrap of breath left, on a closely-shaven lawn.

As she looked round in bewilderment, a voice, whose every tone she knew by heart, exclaimed "Eureka!" and before she knew where she was, her two hands were clasped tightly in a firm grasp, and Mr. Wolf himself, with a glad light in his eyes, was looking down into her face as if he were wondrous glad to see it.

The next moment he turned deathly pale, for he was still very weak; but, as he sank down on the sofa, which had been brought out for him, he drew her down with him, still holding her hands, as if he were afraid that she would vanish the instant he let go.

"I thought I was never going to see you again," she said breathlessly, as her heart leapt for joy; and she scanned his face with eager anxiety.

How thin, how terribly wasted, he looked, and yet so wonderfully handsome!

Perhaps her young eyes told more than they were meant to tell, for a slow smile crept round his lips, and, bending his face, as if to hide it, he kissed one little hand after the other.

She drew them away shyly, with a throbbing heart.

"It would have been better for you if you never had," he said in a low voice.

"Some people say it is better to die than to live," she answered promptly, forgetting how much her words implied.

"Don't you know that I was trying hard to be eternally good?" and again he smiled.

"You were being very disagreeable. I don't call that being good," turning away her burning face.

"They told me you were going to marry Mark Levasseur, but I didn't believe it for a moment. Good Heavens, child, what is the matter!" for all the blushes died away from the rose-bud face, and left it as white as a snow-drop.

"I had forgotten him," in a tone of the deepest anguish, "and you have reminded me."

"Well, forget him again, and tell me how you managed to find me out."

She explained rather incoherently how she was staying at Lady Mitford's, and how they had all come a long way for a picnic. She had heard that he had been moved from the Castle to a small lodge at the further extremity of the estate, for the sake of greater quiet, but she had no idea that it was at all near to the ruins which they were supposed to be inspecting.

"I suppose that man has told you that I am an infamous impostor," he said, after a pause, as a shadow came across his face. "He clings on to the Grange like grim death."

"No," and she turned her face away with a smothered sigh, and looked across the tall white lilies in the garden to the green branches of the woods beyond. "He offers to give it up to you."

An instant change came over his expression, a new light into his eyes.

"Jove! he must know that he has no right to it," he exclaimed joyfully, as a slight colour came into his pale cheeks.

"Would you care so very much!" she asked dolefully, losing the colour out of her own.

"Care!" he cried rapturously, "care to get back my birthright—care to take my stand amongst the other gentlemen of the county, with as long a line of ancestry behind me as any of them can boast! Oh, child! you can't guess what this is to me!"

"I must go now," more and more chilled by the warmth of his enthusiasm—all the gladness in her young heart withering away.

He demurred, against his better judgment, but she persisted. He clasped her hand tight, but it lay quite limp in his.

"Eureka, look at me," he said urgently, as he walked slowly by her side towards the gate.

But she turned away all the more.

When he came to the gate he leant against it wearily, for his strength was small; but there was still that glad look on his face.

"You dear little messenger of good news, when shall I see you again?" he asked cheerfully as she waited dumbly for him to let her through.

"Let me go, please," she said hurriedly, for

the tears were already rushing to her eyes, and she was horribly afraid of breaking down.

"Not till you have answered me."

She was shaking from head to foot, but she tried to speak steadily.

"You said it was better not—perhaps you were right."

He started as if she had struck him.

"This from you, Eureka!"

She did not dare to meet the reproach in his eyes, but, pulling the gate open, darted through it into the wood, as quickly as she had run out of it a few minutes before.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### WOULD HE BE GLAD OR SORRY?

LEANING against an oak-tree, straight in the line of her hurried flight, stood Mark Levasseur. His face was a complete study of evil passions.

"Well, Miss Woodville, so you've torn yourself away at last," he exclaimed with a sneer. "I was almost tired of waiting."

She might have told him that no one had asked him to do so, but she was too much occupied with the discovery that he knew she had seen Mr. Wolf to think of anything else.

"I had not the slightest idea that he was there," she said in eager self-defence.

"And yet you went to him as straight as an arrow," with a malicious gleam in his eyes. "Do you expect me to believe you?"

His heart was on fire with the fiercest jealousy, and he could scarcely force himself to speak with decent civility.

"Believe me or not, just as you like," she answered, drawing up her neck disdainfully as anger restored her self-possession. "I never say anything but the truth. Lady Mitford will be wondering where I am," she added, walking on.

"Rather late to remember that; and let me tell you," hurrying on by her side, "that you've done a very risky thing for yourself. What would your mother say to your visiting a bachelor by yourself?"

Her cheeks flamed, but her eyes flashed indignantly.

"I simply ran into a garden belonging to Lord and Lady Trefusis, and if he was there it wasn't my fault."

"That is an explanation that would satisfy no man alive. I tell you that I could make such a scandal out of this that you would not dare to show your face in society; but I won't, because I mean to marry you."

The words sent a cold shiver down her spine, but she went on fast, bewildered by a storm of conflicting feelings.

She scarcely knew where she was going, or what she was doing. Death would be infinitely preferable to marriage with Mark Levasseur, and yet how could she disappoint Mr. Wolf?

She was so fully occupied with her thoughts that she ran right up against a tree, and struck her forehead a sharp blow.

"You've hurt yourself," Levasseur exclaimed in dismay.

"It doesn't matter," she said wearily.

It seemed to her that they would never reach the rest of the party; but Captain Armstrong saw her blue dress through the trunks of the trees, and, giving a joyful shout, dashed into the wood to meet her.

"We gave you up for lost. Where have you been? Have you seen a ghost?"—staring at her pale face.

"No, but I'm tired to death."

"Well, come along; you're too late for the ruins, but Sir Thomas has given me leave to drive you home. Isn't that a lark!—for me, at least."

She tried to smile in return, but her heart was heavy as lead, and she could scarcely make any response to his almost uproarious cheerfulness.

There was dancing again in the evening, and Lillian was undoubtedly the belle.

Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes bright as two stars, and no one could have guessed that the brave girl was half wild with the terror of the ever-nearing future.

"Let me rest, please; I can't go on," she said

with a sigh, but Captain Armstrong, who was her partner, would not let her sit down lest he should lose the remainder of the waltz.

He let her stand still as a compromise, and fanned her most assiduously.

Whilst he was talking a heap of voluble nonsense she was listening with all her ears to a conversation which was going on behind her back between Lady Mitford and a Mrs. Poppinger.

"You know every girl in London society went mad about the man when he first appeared, with his handsome face and romantic history, but I believe he is wrapped up in his own conceit, and doesn't think anybody good enough for him."

"But is it true that he is going to marry Lady Kate Trower, with her mint of money?"

"Quite true," Lady Mitford said, with an air of superior information. "She is staying at the Castle, and I believe she slipped away from all the rest, and spent hours alone with him in the Dower House; at least I was told that some girl was there, and it must have been Lady Kate, because she never sticks at anything."

"She will go too far one day, and then society will have to cut her! Good gracious, what's happened?" she exclaimed, in alarm, as she overcame with heat and fatigue, and horrified by the words she had overheard, Lillian Woodville sank in a heap of white fluff at her feet. There was instant commotion, but Captain Armstrong was forcibly pushed aside, and it was Mark Levasseur who bent over that small prostrate form, with a tenderness that even his own mother never knew that he possessed, and raising it in his arms, carried it straight through the eager, pressing crowd into the conservatory.

"Poor child, she is utterly tired out," he said, as he found Lady Mitford by his side, looking down with unkind eyes at the unconscious girl, whom he had laid on a sofa.

"If she is tired it is your fault, not mine," she said, crossly. "She was with you for half the afternoon."

"You are mistaken; she only gave me as little of her society as she possibly could," drawing in his lips.

"Then can you tell me where she was?" looking at him in surprise.

"I must refer you to Miss Woodville," stiffly. "Do get some salts or something to revive her. You must know what to do in a case like this."

"I will send my housekeeper. I have other guests to attend to besides this ridiculous girl," and in a passion of suppressed temper, Lady Mitford did what he most wished her to do—went away.

"I wonder what she was up to!" she reflected as she went back to the drawing-room. "By-the-by, they weren't so very far from the Lodge where Wolferton is staying. I never thought of it; I'd bet anything that she was the girl who was with him. Oh! the hypocritical prude! Won't I make a scandal of it, if I can!" and brimful of malice, she hurried back to Mrs. Poppinger to tell her of her suspicions, and quite forgot to send Mrs. Higgins, the house-keeper, to Lillian's assistance.

When the poor girl opened her eyes it was a shock to find herself alone with the man whom she hated and feared. She raised herself on her elbow and looked round in some bewilderment.

"Why am I here?" she asked, in a low voice.

"Because you were taken ill in the drawing-room. I carried you in, myself."

She drew her brows together in great annoyance, and slipping her feet quickly to the ground, announced her intention of going to bed.

"One moment," he said, earnestly; "I have something to say to you."

"Not now—I can't listen to anything now," putting her hand to her feverish forehead.

"But you must; I won't keep you long. Do you wish Falcon Grange to be given up to a man whom I call an impostor, and you take for an Earl?" scanning her face with a glance as sharp as a gimlet.

Her blue eyes opened wide, and a startled look came over her lovely face as she started to her feet, and leant one small hand on the head of the sofa.



"No, I want it for Mr. Wolf. I don't care a straw for any Earl in the kingdom."

"And you don't know that your pretended Mr. Wolf is called by his misguided friends Lord Wolferton, cousin to Lord Trefusis? I couldn't have credited it!" he said, in unfeigned astonishment.

She clasped her hands without a word, too bewildered to speak. Oh! the wide gulf that seemed to open and spread itself out between the Earl of Wolferton and the simple Lillian Woodville.

How kind and good he had been to her, without one bit of pride or haughtiness; but she would rather he had remained simple Mr. Wolf.

Levasseur watched her as she stood there, a slight graceful figure, with the lamp-light on her golden head, a wistful smile on her sweet lips, a rose that Armstrong had given her in the belt which encircled her slight waist.

Was she going to throw up her whole project for the chance of winning a coronet? A fierce pang of jealousy darted through his heart as he said, maliciously,

"Perhaps Mr. Wolf," with an ironical emphasis on the name, "forgot to mention that he was going to marry Lady Kate Trower?"

"I have heard it," she said, coldly. "My only wish is that he should be happy."

"You are a marvel of self-denial!" he exclaimed, in wondering perplexity, doubting whether she were an angel or a very human fraud.

"But I warn you that there is no self-denial in my disposition, and if I give up an estate, I must have more than its full equivalent. And what is more, I must have an answer at once."

She looked round with hunted eyes. Was there no escape?

Would Mr. Wolf be glad or sorry when he knew the price that she had paid, or rather would his joy at regaining his inheritance overbalance his anger at her marriage with his enemy?

A powerful instinct urged her to insist upon delay. She clung with youthful tenacity to the hope that something might happen. Turning upon Levasseur, she said with decision,

"You must give me till to-morrow."

He shook his head. A few hours' delay might ruin everything. By to-morrow she might hear the news which had reached him that morning, and snap her little fingers in his face, for she would know that Wolferton could have Falcon Grange without any sacrifice on his part. Once let her know this, and she would be lost to him for ever.

"Answer me now," he cried, as a great longing came over him, and he stepped nearer. In another moment he would have seized her in his arms, if Lady Mitford had not suddenly stepped between them.

She looked from one to the other—from the girl backing helplessly against the glass wall behind her, with wide, open, horrified eyes, to the man with out-stretched arms, and a passionate look on his usually stern face, such as she had never seen there before.

At one glance she took in every thing. Mark Levasseur had deceived her utterly. This was his pretended friendship for a neglected girl! Oh, how she hated him, the cold, callous, calculating man of the world, transformed by love like a school-boy! He had made fun of her, and mocked her. But oh! he should pay for it, and the girl as well.

"I am glad to see you so completely recovered, Miss Woodville," she said icily.

"I am quite well, thank you, but tired to death. Good-night."

She held out her hand, but to her surprise Lady Mitford did not take it, as she pointed to a door which was partially hidden by a huge azalea, as a hint that she might escape by it.

"I shall want to speak to you to-morrow, Miss Woodville," she said solemnly.

Levasseur sprang forward to open the door, and said in an urgent whisper, "Your answer—when?"

"A quarter to one," Lillian said in a low voice, fixing that hour because by that time both the

morning posts would be in, and also because it was as late as she dared to propose.

Levasseur's face darkened, but he could not utter the fierce remonstrance that rose to his lips because of his hostess's presence.

"Well, Mr. Levasseur," Lady Mitford exclaimed in the bitterest of tones, as he closed the door, "do you expect me to congratulate you?"

"Not at all. Do I look like a man to be congratulated?" he asked in a tone of exasperation. "I tell you that I am nearly mad with myself and with all the world. To think that I, Mark Levasseur, who have always laughed at love, fidelity, and romance, should be caught by a mere chit of a girl with a pretty face!"

He clenched his hand in impotent rage—rage at his own contemptible weakness, and Lady Mitford laughed at him; her laugh was shrill and unmelodious, without the smallest spark of hilarity in it; and her heart was almost bursting with jealousy.

Mark Levasseur turned from her in disgust, and stepped out into the cool, fresh air in the shadowy garden, thinking of to-morrow, the golden to-morrow, when Lillian Woodville would promise to be his very own.

He knew the immensity of the sacrifice on her part, and yet he had not the smallest scruple in demanding it for his own selfish gratification; to steal her from Lord Wolferton by a shameful fraud made his heart throb with triumph instead of shame.

And up above, on the second floor, behind a gabled window through which a ray of candle-light streamed out into the scented darkness, the poor girl whom he had so cruelly deceived was sobbing her heart out, as one without hope.

So young—so very young—her feet standing on the threshold of woman-hood, with only an insignificant past behind her, she must give up all the glorious chances of the future, and consign herself to a life of misery, for the sake of a man who would never know it.

This was the acme of generosity, to render "Mr. Wolf" this gigantic service, and never to claim his thanks!

## CHAPTER IX.

### JUST ON THE BRINK.

LILLIAN WOODVILLE came down to breakfast the next morning in a pretty pink cambric, looking a very charming specimen of an English girl, but feeling like a convict about to partake of her last meal before being hanged.

Her mind was already made up to return that day, and she asked Captain Armstrong if the post-office was near at hand, in order that she might send off a telegram.

He remonstrated in a low voice, but with great energy, only yielding reluctantly when he looked into her white face, and saw that for some reason which she would not give, she was desperately anxious to get away.

Somebody proposed a game of tennis, and Lillian eagerly consented to join it, anxious so occupy herself in any way in order not to think of that dreaded interview at a quarter to one.

It was a glorious morning. Roses, lilies, heliotropes, and musks sent out a wealth of fragrance on the sunlit air; bees, with their cheerful buzz, hovered from blossom to blossom on provender intent, whilst the careless butterflies, as they fluttered ceaselessly over the lawn, seemed bent on nothing but pleasure.

Everyone seemed happy except herself. Oh, it was cruel to be blighted in the zenith of her youth, and yet the poor girl never faltered from her purpose.

By her marriage she would right a terrible wrong, for Falcon Grange would go back to its rightful owner, and with that she must try to be content.

Her companions were gay as the birds and butterflies, and every now and then she tried to join in their peals of laughter, but it was a very poor attempt, and Captain Armstrong watched her with anxious eyes.

Presently a servant came out to say that as soon as the game was ended Lady Mitford would like to speak to Miss Woodville.

"Don't go," Captain Armstrong whispered. "It's a beastly shame to interrupt us."

"I must go," she said, with such an air of resignation that he volunteered to accompany her, but she knew that would not be admissible.

As she passed through the hall she saw that it was already a quarter-past twelve. Only one short half-hour between her and her misery!

All the guests were out of the house on such a lovely morning, so Lady Mitford had the large drawing-room all to herself.

Her face wore an expression of triumphant malice. She thought she had it in her power to crush an innocent girl, and she meant to use it unsparingly in a spirit of mean revenge.

"I am sorry to tell you, Miss Woodville," she began, severely, as soon as her intended victim had entered the room, "that I have a serious complaint to make as to your conduct since you have been in this house."

Lillian drew herself up with the air of a young queen.

"Indeed, Lady Mitford, I have done nothing that I'm in the least ashamed of, or that I should be afraid to tell to my own mother."

"I daresay not," interrupting rather drily. "Young ladies now-a-days are ashamed of nothing. Really, manners have become so outrageously loose that the wonder is if anyone has any character to boast of."

"I have been out very little, so I don't come across these people," Lillian said, with quiet dignity.

Lady Mitford frowned, indignant that such a girl should brave her.

"It seems to me," she said, crossly, "that you have learnt their lessons only too well. Can you deny that you went to Falcon Grange alone with Lord Wolferton in the dead of the night, on the day of his accident?"

A sudden change came over the girl's innocent face. She turned deadly pale as she remembered Lady Trefusis's urgent injunctions to keep that visit, and all that concerned it, a secret; and for the first time she bent her head in what looked like ashamed confusion.

"Ah, you have the conscience to look ashamed at last," Lady Mitford cried in cruel triumph. "I thought I should bring down your pride before I had finished. And not content with such a flagrant act of imprudence, you must needs sneak away from the respectable society with which I had taken care to surround you, and spend hours alone with that well-known rogue again."

Poor Lillian blushed crimson with passionate indignation; but before she could defend herself or Wolferton, the door, which was ajar, was pushed open, and Lady Trefusis, in a large picture hat, and a gorgeous gown of two or three shades of petunia, stepped into the room.

Lillian ran up to her with a cry of joy, and Lady Trefusis kissed her affectionately on both cheeks. Then she turned to Lady Mitford with an angry light in her eyes.

"Excuse me for coming in so unceremoniously," she said, with cold courtesy; "but nobody seemed to hear the bell, so, as the door was open and I am not fond of waiting, I ventured to walk in. You seemed to be charging my little friend with something very dreadful. May I, as her old friend, see if I cannot exonerate her?"

As her hostess seemed to have forgotten to ask her to sit down she took her seat on a divan, with Lillian by her side, and waited in an uncompromising attitude for an answer.

Lady Mitford was inwardly raging at the interruption, but as she was afraid of offending the Viscountess, and thereby losing all invitations to the Castle, she was obliged to hide her feelings under a mask of acid politeness.

"I need not trouble you with these little worries."

"It sounded more than little worries," Lady Trefusis said haughtily, as she privately squeezed the small hand she was holding in her own. "You seemed to be taxing this poor child with passing hours alone with my husband's cousin. Perhaps it will relieve your mind to hear that I was at the Lodge all the while."

"You—I thought you were miles away!" in angry surprise. "But, at least," recovering herself, "you cannot say that you chaperoned

Miss Woodville to Falcon Grange on the night of your dance."

"Do you mean that night when she and Mrs. Parton—a most respectable person—saved poor Wolferton's life?" the Viscountess asked with a mischievous smile. "You seem to have got hold of the wrong end—of both stories, and as it can't be pleasant to Miss Woodville to be so mistaken, I propose to carry her off at once to the Castle, where everyone appreciates her, and my husband is simply infatuated about her. Run, child, and put on your hat."

"I will not detain anyone who does not wish to stay," Lady Mitford said sourly.

"But I have not packed up," Lillian exclaimed with a frightened glance at an ornamental clock, the hands of which pointed to a quarter to one. The hour for the dreaded interview had come, but she did not dare to mention it. On the other hand, she could not break her word, even if it would save her from Levasseur.

"Never mind, your things can be sent after you. I've a great piece of good news to give you only somebody insisted on telling you himself," and Lady Trefusis looked after her with a nod and a smile, as she went slowly towards the door.

"The child looks the picture of misery," she thought to herself. "I only arrived just in time to save her from that old cat."

As Lillian crossed the hall, Mark Levasseur's tall form appeared at the door of the next room, where he had been waiting like a tiger ready to pounce.

A cold shiver ran through her from head to foot. She felt like a prisoner with his native hills already in sight, and yet condemned to die.

"Your answer," he said, sternly, his eyes fixed on her white face as he said to himself, "No, she hasn't told her. I'm all right as yet."

Lillian's blue eyes roamed round the large hall in desperate hope of an interruption; but the hall was quite empty, and the only sound that broke the stillness was the grating of the Viscountess's carriage wheels on the gravel.

"Not here—not now," she said, agitatedly. "There is no time. I'm just off to the Castle."

"It takes no time to say 'Yes,' and that is all I want," he said, his voice harsh with intense earnestness, as he knew that the very next minute the cruel fraud which he was practising on the poor girl might be exposed, and all his plans undone. "Be quick—if you are in a hurry."

"I will just go and put on my hat first," she suggested, catching at the first straw that presented itself.

"Not till I have your answer," changing his position so as to stand before her and block her retreat to the stairs, and thus placing himself in a line with the hall-door. "Is Falcon Grange to be mine or Wolferton's?"

She did not answer—the blood rushed to her head, and throbbed wildly in her temples. She felt so lonely, so helpless, so completely at the mercy of this man who clung to another man's property with an iron grip that she alone could unloose.

"Is there no other way?" she asked in a tone that might have softened the heart of a savage, but as she looked up at him with wistful, imploring eyes, he only thought of the beauty of entreating eyes and sweet, quivering lips, and longed more fiercely to have her at all prices for his own.

"None," he said, with decision. "Be my wife and, on the word of a gentleman, I hand over Falcon Grange at once to Wolferton."

"A gentleman!" echoed Lord Wolferton himself, as he stood in the doorway, in a tone of the utmost contempt, "a gentleman who is practising the dirtiest trick I ever heard of on a poor little girl! Listen to me, Eure—Miss Woodville," correcting himself, hastily, "Falcon Grange is mine already, and this man who calls himself so glibly a gentleman, knows it as well as I do."

"Is this true?" Lillian asked, in breathless joy, as a huge weight seemed to be lifted off her young heart.

"What's the use of denying it?" Mark Levasseur exclaimed, in his harshest voice, which shook with the intensity of his baffled rage. "You

would believe that fellow before all the world. I wish you, good-morning!" and catching up his hat from a stand he turned aside without one word of apology, down the steps into the heat of the sun. Passing the smart victoria which was still waiting outside, with a muttered curse he went on, knowing that in the very moment of victory his triumph had been changed into a complete and ignominious defeat.

Lillian's knees suddenly gave way, and she sank down on to a low couch which ran along the wall. She was free! And she felt as if she must sit quite still to listen to the song of joy which her heart was singing.

"I have to scold you, Eureka," Lord Wolferton said, as he sat down beside her. "By the merest chance, as I waited outside, I caught sight of that brute, and guessed that it was you whom he was badgering. If I hadn't—you would have promised to be Mrs. Levasseur!" in deepest reproach.

"Yes, but it was to get you the Grange," she said eagerly. "You know I hated him!"

"And would anything have compensated for such a crime—yes, crime! I mean it. You and that scoundrel! Good Heavens! It makes me shudder to think of it. And, after all, child, do you know who gave me back the Grange?"

She shook her head.

"You."

"Impossible!" the colour rushing to her face in a lovely pink.

"True," he said, with a joyous light in his eyes. "The shot you fired so pluckily damaged the wall, broke a secret spring, and discovered some hidden cupboard. Nobody thought about it at the time, because I was in a bad way, you know; and afterwards Trefusis had gone to Wales for some fishing."

"The other day he went over, at the request of dear old Parton, and actually found my father's will hidden in a leather case. It gives me the Grange, as I knew it would; but they would not tell me till last night, for fear of turning my brain. So now, Eureka, do you see what you've done?" turning to her, with a bright smile. "You've saved my life, you've given me back my home, and I now want you to give me your dear little self as well."

He put his arm round her and drew her gently to him—so very gently for fear of frightening her—his handsome face was close to hers, his dark moustaches very near her sweet, pure lips, when she suddenly pushed him away and sprang to her feet.

"Oh, how could you? how could you?" she cried passionately. "I know you are engaged to Lady Kate Trower," and she ran towards the stairs.

He sprang after her, and, in order to stop her, caught hold of her blue cambric, protesting, at the same time, that he was engaged to nobody but herself.

She was stooping towards him, her lovely, irresolute face flushed with the sweetest of blushes, and he was looking up into hers with an expression on his own that no one could mistake, when the drawing-room door opened.

Lady Mitford was, at the same moment, ushering Lady Trefusis into the hall, as the latter had grown tired of waiting for a girl who never came.

"Good gracious! what do I see?" she exclaimed in blank surprise, coming to an abrupt stop.

"Let me present to you the future Countess of Wolferton," the Earl responded, with a triumphant smile.

"Oh, my dear child, I am so thankful," and Lady Trefusis hurried forward to clasp her in her arms.

"But I never said 'yes,'" Lillian whispered, blushing and tremulous.

"Hush, hush, it's all right, and I could dance for joy," the Viscountess said in an excited whisper.

Then, turning to the Earl, with outstretched hands, she assured him that she never was so pleased at anything before.

"In spite of my being such a fearful scapegrace?" he asked mischievously, as he stooped to kiss her cheek.

"Yes. Scapegraces always settle down into the best of husbands," with a gracious smile.

"Wait a moment," Lady Mitford said, with asperity. "Mr. Mark Levasseur will have something to say to this, or I'm much mistaken."

"On the contrary, I've had my say to Mr. Mark Levasseur," Wolferton said haughtily, "and I don't think that he will bring his lying tongue within ten miles of me for any consideration."

"Please to remember that he is my friend," Lady Mitford said severely, though at the moment her feelings were anything but friendly towards the absent man.

"I only remember that I have just convicted him of trying to win Miss Woodville by one of the basest frauds ever invented," he said sternly, after Lillian had flown upstairs at last to fetch her hat.

"A man is never just to his rival," she answered discourteously.

They parted with grave salutations on either side, but when the carriage drove off the faces of the happy trio inside were radiant with joy.

After lunch at the Lodge, Lord Wolferton was allowed a long rest; then they went on to the Castle, where Lady Trefusis left the lovers in the library, whilst she told her husband all that had happened at Mitford Hall.

Lillian felt utterly bewildered at the sudden change in her destiny. She was looking out of the window with dreamy eyes, thinking of that never-to-be-forgotten day when she first met "Mr. Wolf," when he came behind her, and bending over her, took his first kiss from her rose-bud mouth.

The amazement of the twins was unbounded when Lady Trefusis drove over the next day, and told them that their youngest sister was to be the Countess of Wolferton.

Mrs. Woodville's delight was immense, for some unkind rumours had reached her ears, and she had feared lest, through some girlish imprudence, Lillian might have to live a life of blighted spinsterhood.

Agnes and Fanny did not object at all to being bridesmaids to a future Countess, and they laughingly declared that Lillian never really came out till her marriage.

The Earl took possession of Falcon Grange, turned in a troop of workmen at once, and watched their proceedings with the greatest interest.

Every one took it for granted that he was the rightful heir when he had the family property to back him, and the only voice that would have been likely to raise itself against him was silenced for ever, as Mark Levasseur, on the very day that united the lovers in an indissoluble union, was found dead in his bed.

[THE END.]

## FACETIÆ.

QUERY for City man—What is a "pure" swindle?

"WHY do they call their daughter 'Olive'?" "Because a liking for her has to be acquired."

"I HAVE a mind to get married." "Well, you won't have any afterward," said a wicked listener.

SHE: "Writing for the press is thankless work. Is it not?" HE: "No; everything I write is returned with thanks."

WHAT SHE GAVE FOR IT: "It is a beautiful ring, my dear, what did you give for it?" asked practical Mary. "Myself," replied Eleanor, poetically.

SHE: "Before we were married you said you would give up your life for me." HE: "Well, didn't I? I haven't had any life since we were married."

SHE AGREED WITH HIM: "Speaking about smart fellows," said young Mr. Gurley, "I could be weal smart if I had a mind, Miss Gidley." "That's so," replied the girl. "That's all you ever lacked."



## SOCIETY.

PRINCESS MAY's eight bridesmaids will all be daughters of peers.

THE Princess of Wales is deeply attached to Princess May, and is gratified that she is to be indeed her daughter.

A SOMEWHAT unique present is to be given the Princess May from the ladies of Manitoba. It is to take the form of a sleigh and team.

THE Princess Rulalie is exceptionally bright and very studious. She speaks English, German, French, Italian, and Portuguese as fluently as her own language.

THE Royal Schloss at Wiesbaden is one of the Crown residences which were granted to the Empress Frederick in 1883 by the Emperor William, the others being the Charlottenhof at Potsdam and the Schloss at Homburg.

DIRECTLY after the Royal wedding the Duke and Duchess of Fife start for Duff House, Banffshire, where they will reside until the second week in August, when they go to New Mar Lodge, their place near Braemar, until the end of October.

THE wedding presents for the Duke of York and Princess May will be of such a costly kind and so numerous that it will probably be found necessary to display them at Buckingham Palace, and to keep them there for safety.

THE Duke of York and his bride will not take up their residence at the Palace until the early part of next year. They are to pass the autumn and the winter at Sandringham, where they will live at the Cottage in the grounds, which has been enlarged and refurnished.

THE Queen's birthday gift to Princess May was a beautiful white rose done in enamel. It is a perfect little example of the jeweller's art and very prettily appropriate, being the badge of the House of York. The little rose is jewelled, and is really very lovely.

AT her last Drawing Room Queen Victoria wore, in addition to diamonds, the following ornaments: the star and ribbon of the Garter, the Orders of Victoria and Albert, the Crown of India, the Red Cross, and the Hessian Family order.

OUR Queen is a great source of wonder to the Italians. The idea that the famous Empress-Queen, with hundreds of horses at her service, prefers driving about in a simple little carriage drawn by a sleepy white donkey, seems almost incredible.

THE Royal wedding will take place on Old Midsummer Day—Thursday, July 6—which is the birthday of Princess Victoria of Wales, and the same date as the wedding of Princess Aribert of Anhalt—the Queen's granddaughter, Princess Louise of Schleswig-Holstein.

PRINCESS VICTORIA OF WALES is rather grave and thoughtful like the Duchess of Fife, but the youngest of the Prince of Wales's daughters is irrepressibly lively and for this reason is a great favourite with the Tecks especially the Princess May, and whenever the twain are together merriment reigns supreme.

A CHALET in the recesses of Ballochbuie Forest has several times been visited by the Queen for afternoon tea. The deer is running lower than it has been for many years, and salmon fishing is almost entirely stopped. Many of the tributaries of the river are quite dry. The red deer in the Royal forests are very numerous and in splendid condition this season, and there are large herds of roe deer in the Birkhall and Aberfeldie woods.

THE Queen is energetically engaged in arranging the details of the coming wedding, the difficulty being to effect a satisfactory compromise between three more or less conflicting elements in the situation: the desire of the Princess of Wales that the ceremony shall be as quiet as possible; the craving of the public for a pageant; and the necessity of inviting certain illustrious and distinguished guests lest offence be taken in high quarters.

## STATISTICS.

BERLIN'S 1,315,600 people have only 26,000 dwellings, fifty persons living in each house.

THE average annual payment to British soldiers in pensions for wounds is only £16,000.

WHILE in Britain the average number of letters per head of the population was only 3 fifty years ago, to-day it is 41, or, in proportion 7 times more than in Spain, nearly 6 times more than in Italy, nearly thrice as many as in Germany, more than twice as many as in France, and not very far short of twice as many as in America.

A MAN 5 feet 1 inch should be 120 pounds, 5 feet 2 inches should be 120, 5 feet 3 inches should be 133, 5 feet 4 inches should be 136, 5 feet 5 inches should be 142, 5 feet 6 inches should be 145, 5 feet 7 inches should be 148, 5 feet 8 inches should be 155, 5 feet 9 inches should be 162, 5 feet 10 inches should be 169, 5 feet 11 inches should be 174, 6 feet high should be 178.

## GEMS.

FORGETFULNESS and carelessness are the byways that lead to failure.

PEOPLE are scarce who do not talk more than they should about themselves.

THE wise and active conquer difficulties by daring to attempt them.

THERE are people who pray for showers of blessing who want them to come without any clouds.

A MAN is a great bundle of tools. He is born into this life without the knowledge of how to use them. Education is the process of learning their use, and dangers and troubles are God's whetstones with which to keep them sharp.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FOR hard-sauce, use one half-cup of butter, well beaten; stir in slowly one cup of fine sugar and beat to a cream. Put on a plate and grate a little nutmeg over it. Be sure and keep in a cool place.

ASPARAGUS OMELET.—Nothing can surpass an asparagus omelet for breakfast. To prepare it roll half a bunch of asparagus and cut the tops and tender part into half-inch lengths; season with a little salt, pepper, and butter, and put aside on a stove to keep warm while the omelet is being made. Beat six eggs, white and yolks together, with a teaspoonful of milk for each egg, a saltspoon of salt, and a pinch of white pepper; brown two tablespoonfuls of butter in a frying-pan, pour the eggs in, and as soon as it begins to set at the edges turn them up and shake the pan to keep the omelet from sticking; it should be cooked sufficiently in five minutes. Put the asparagus in, double the omelet, and serve at once on a hot dish.

TAPIoca CREAM.—Soak one cup of tapioca in about two cups of milk or water over night. Add a quart of rich milk in the morning. Put the whole in a double boiler, and cook it for half an hour; then add the yolks of three eggs and a scant cup of sugar, with a lemon-peel grated, with a lump of sugar for flavouring. Stir the pudding continually after adding the eggs, which must be put in carefully to prevent their being curdled. Let the pudding cook about three minutes, then add the whites of three eggs beaten to a very stiff froth and stirred into the cream. Pour the pudding in a glass dish when it is a little cooled, and let it become perfectly cold. Sometimes a layer of jelly is spread over the cold tapioca, and it is covered with a meringue instead of the whites of the eggs being stirred into the hot pudding. It should always be served cold.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

SILVER is so plentiful that it is being more and more used for decoration.

DIALS were spoken of by Isaiah seven hundred years before the Christian era.

THE material of which meerschaum pipes are made is used in Spain as a building stone.

ALL animals whose habitat is the Arctic regions turn white in winter.

LEMONS ripen every month in the year in California; oranges from December to July.

FLIRTING is punishable with death in Titipu; in Tonga it is let off with penal servitude.

THE herring family contributes more largely to the food of human beings than any other of the fish families.

A ROMAN camp, a Saxon temple, and three cathedrals have in turn occupied the site of St. Paul's.

THE Chinese, Japanese, Malays, Siamese, New Zealanders, and North American Indians are beardless.

No convents either for men or women are to be found in Sweden and Norway. They are forbidden by law.

BOTH the Kurds and Cossacks believe that Mount Ararat is guarded by an unearthly being, and that no man can ascend the peak and live.

MARS revolves around the sun at a mean distance of about one hundred and forty-one million miles.

THE most remarkable springs in the world are in California. They produce sulphuric acid and ink.

RICHEST in ferns of any country in the world is New Zealand, which boasts some three hundred species.

THE extent of the oscillation of tall chimneys may be exactly taken by a close observation of the shadows they cut on the ground.

THE sapphire which adorns the summit of the English crown is the same that Edward the Confessor wore in his ring.

THE emerald improves in colour on exposure to the light. Pearls kept in the dark lose their lustre, but regain it on exposure to the sun.

SHOEMAKERS say that the average woman, weighing one hundred and thirty pounds and measuring less than five feet six inches, wears a four and a half shoe.

THE most notable attraction in a mosque at Delhi is a single red hair which is said to have been plucked from the moustache of Mahomet.

In some parts of Russia the snow actually is preserved in great straw, sand and manure-covered heaps as a means of irrigating the land during the summer heat.

THE wives of Siamese noblemen wear knickerbockers, and cut their hair so that it sticks straight up from their heads. The average length of their hair is about an inch and a half.

THE first book with a date printed in England was "Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers, emprinted by me, William Caxton, at Westmestre, the yere of our Lord, m.cccc. lxxvij" (1477).

AMBER blazes like a torch when light is applied, and great quantities have been consumed in the unbroken worship of thirteen centuries at Mecca, the sacred city of Moslem.

INDIA has perhaps a greater variety of plants than any other country in the world, having 15,000 native species, while the flora of the entire continent of Europe only embraces about 10,000.

THE flower called by the Greeks "windshaken" is supposed to be identical with our fairy anemone. The Greeks believed that it sprang from the tears shed by Venus over the dead Adonis.

SHOULD the little Isle of Man ever want a national flower, it should not be hard to choose one. All over the island, in the glens, in gardens, at cottage doors, and all along the wayside, the red fuchsia grows in profusion.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. B.—We do not advise such cases.

HUNTER.—The statement is quite accurate.

DENIS.—The Company are responsible for it.

T. S.—The King of Spain was seven years old.

ZINGARA.—We have never heard of any such thing.

MATER.—Yes, vaccination is at present compulsory.

COOPER.—Please explain what the article is used for.

GRIEF.—You should go to a surgeon about the matter.

BETTY.—Raw potatoes are used for cleaning paintings.

DAISY.—Summer freckles are caused by the heat of summer.

TOOGLE.—Easter Sunday in 1861 fell on the 31st of March.

VIC.—Over eating certainly renders the intellect sluggish.

JERRY.—One half of all food consumed in England comes from abroad.

FANNY.—They cost very little, and can be had from most stationers.

JACK HORNER.—Waterloo Bridge was opened toll free on October 5, 1878.

TONORANT.—The letter q is never used without the letter u following it.

ESAU.—We really cannot understand your question. State the facts more plainly.

SOPHY.—Power of language is indicated by fulness beneath the eyes.

ELAIN.—The Imperial Institute was designed to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee.

O. A.—There can be no appeal to the country without a dissolution.

DICKY.—You are not too old if your capacity for receiving education still remains.

ANGELINE.—Your own feelings must be the guide, for no rule can possibly be laid down.

BAKTER.—Go to a surgeon and get him to examine you.

L. S. T.—We have never heard of anything for the purpose.

A SUBSCRIBER.—The Customs duty on imported cigars is 5s. per lb.

X. Y. Z.—The fight at Isandlwana, Zululand, was on January 22, 1879.

FLOSY.—We cannot make anything at all of your letter.

MOXOM.—The Church of England is not supported by the State.

BORTAL.—Legitimate boxing matches are not illegal in a public-house.

A CONSTANT READER.—The rate of interest varies at the Bank of England from time to time.

JEANNETTE.—These columns are not intended for queries of your description.

MYLES.—The Thames is 350 miles long. The Severn is 180 miles long to the Bristol Channel.

JOHNNIE.—Bona-fide lodgers at licensed houses may obtain refreshment at any time.

COMME IL FAUT.—Russian tea is made by pouring the boiling tea on a slice of lemon in each cup.

BARRARA.—Like most things, coffee indulged in to excess is injurious.

HOUSEHOLDER.—Property tax is payable on incomes of £150 a year and upwards.

HAPPY LITTLE WIFE.—Vinegar will remove the disagreeable odour of kerosene from tinware.

SARAH JANE.—Add a pinch of salt to the white of eggs to make them beat up quickly.

JONATHAN.—Creaking shoes can be softened by rubbing soft soap into the seams.

UNSOPHISTICATED.—Such a ceremony as that of introduction would of course differ in every country.

BERNARD.—To become a solicitor a person must serve his articles and be "admitted" after examination.

YOUNG WIDOW.—The consent of the cemetery authorities and of the owner of the grave must be obtained.

A TWENTY YEARS' READER.—We would advise you to write to the prison authorities in your district, who would give you the information required.

ALICIA.—Omphale is simply a Greek female name. It means the centre. Eurydice is also a Greek name, and means broad justice.

BABETTE.—There are only a few women past middle life who can safely venture to wear an extremely large hat.

BERTIE'S LOVE.—A dancing license is necessary where a hall is used by professors of dancing for a weekly dance.

DUBIOUS.—Landlord can arrest wages over 20s. weekly for unpaid balance of rent, but cannot take the new furniture out of the new house; that is the new landlord's security for the new rent.

VARIAN.—Get a printed form containing rules and regulations for entering the army from your nearest post-office.

COQUETTE.—The customs of society do not permit young ladies to declare their sentiments on such subjects.

TROUBLED TOM.—If you (a man of twenty-five years) cannot get the better of such a childish condition, we can assure you no one else can assist in any way.

G. G.—Unless with the consent of the landlord, a tenant may not remove trees planted by him in a garden.

A BASHFUL LOVER.—Almost any style of ring may be properly used as an engagement ring, but a diamond or pearl ring is oftener selected than any other.

AMBITION.—If you are determined to endeavour to go on the stage you had better get an introduction to some well-known and respectable theatrical agent.

MOONEY.—Dipping the feet in cold water several times and then rubbing them briskly till warm, with a coarse towel, will sometimes have the desired effect.

JOYCE.—The only way to keep lard sweet is to put it into an air-tight receptacle, such as a bladder, and to melt it over again when it threatens to go wrong.

BEN.—Wait till you get the chance of a friend either going to your brother or one coming from him to return.

SEEDY.—Hot lemonade is one of the best remedies in the world for a cold. It acts promptly and effectively, and has no unpleasant after-effects.

PETER.—The Prince of Wales was born November 9, 1841; the Duke of Edinburgh August 8, 1844; Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Avondale, January 8, 1864.

## WHEN WILL MY SHIP COME IN?

I'm weary to-night from watching,  
My eyes are filled with tears;  
When will my ship come sailing in  
I've waited for many years?

My boyish fancy sent her out  
When my heart was young and gay,  
And year by year I sit and watch,  
And sigh, and hope, and pray.

And as I gaze o'er the ocean,  
There are many ships I see  
With treasures deeply laden,  
But none of them for me.

Oh, why should there be so many  
Who do not wait in vain?  
Their ships go out unloaded,  
Well filled, return again.

Perhaps my ship was freighted  
And ready to sail for home;  
But the spirit that reads the future  
Said, "Tis best she should not come."

For wealth to some means ruin,  
Perhaps 'tis so with me;  
And that is why the laggard  
Lingers so long at sea.

W. E. S.

BLUEBELL.—Clear black coffee, diluted with water and containing a little ammonia, will cleanse and restore black clothes.

RIQUETTE.—It is only in the lancers quadrilles that you set to the corners; in ordinary quadrille figures you bow to partner only.

ROBIN.—Young people, with a little attention, may learn to write any hand, without the least labour of the head or perplexity of the brain.

H. M.—The longest verse is the 9th verse of the 8th chapter of Esther. The shortest verse is the 35th verse of the 11th chapter of St. John.

LADY ELIZABETH.—Do your best to make your party agreeable to those whom you invite, and you will escape all criticism on the part of those worthy to be called "friends."

TOM THUMB.—The miller's thumb is a small fish five or six inches long, probably so-called from its resemblance to a miller's thumb when he used to test the quality of the flour.

CURIOSITY.—The idea of appointing men of note as pall-bearers comes to us from the Romans, Julius Caesar having magistrates for his pall-bearers, and Augustus Cesar senators.

SUFFERER.—An excellent simple remedy for indigestion is the white of an egg, beaten to a stiff froth, and stirred into a wineglass of cold water. It should be taken after each meal.

M. B.—To say a thing is "generally" approved, &c., means that it is approved, &c., by the majority of the people; yet that, although some aspects of it are not acceptable, yet its main principle finds common favour.

ROSE.—For cleaning all kinds of metals, &c., take seven ounces of rottenstone (in powder), one ounce of sweet oil, and enough water to make a paste; apply a small portion, and rub dry with flannel or leather.

WILL.—In the absence of any agreement a landlord is not bound to pay for any repairs, and if you are not disposed to do the necessary repairs yourself, your only alternative is to give notice to quit.

LITTLE WOMAN.—Sprinkling camphor about will banish ants; or, better still, turpentine sprinkled over the floor or on the boards of the cupboards they haunt will drive them away.

COCKNEY.—You ought to address a stranger and a superior as "Sir." "Dear Sir" is too familiar. You can conclude your letter, "Respectfully yours," or "Your obedient servant." Handwriting very fair, but far too many flourishes.

HOUSEKEEPER.—To deal with moths, the closet, ward robe, or trunk should never have any paper on its walls, or a carpet on the floor. In cleaning a closet every corner should be scalded, and next thoroughly saturated with spirits of turpentine.

CONSTANT READER.—Polo was acquired from the Manipuris, and was first played by Europeans in 1863 at Calcutta, whither it had been brought by some officers stationed in Assam. The game can, however, be traced back 600 years before the Christian era.

REGULAR READER.—Perhaps a pleasant state of affairs will soon come to you. At any rate do not marry anyone whom you do not truly love for the sake of being able to quit a home that is not exactly what it should be.

O. G.—To use a crest you must pay one guinea a year. The stamp duty for a grant of arms is ten guineas. If you mount your crest on a carriage or vehicle of any kind you are liable to pay a duty of two guineas per annum.

A. B. C.—It is not usual to do so unless a member resigns; then one must be found to fill his place. On a change of Ministry there is a change of Cabinet, and a change takes place when the majority go against the action of the Ministry.

IMPATIENCE.—"To take one down a peg" is an allusion to lowering a ship's flag, which is regulated by the pegs to which the line is fastened on deck. The higher a ship's colours are raised in saluting, the greater its honour. Hence to take them down a peg is to lower the dignity.

IGNORANCE.—A "reversion" is the undisposed-of interest in land, which reverts to the grantor after the exhaustion of the particular estates which he may have created; and a reversion "in fee simple" would be an unconditional reversion to the original grantor or his heirs generally.

DISABLED.—It is quite easy for a child to learn to write with the left hand; and, although after the muscles have got set with age it is more difficult, almost any man can learn to write with his left hand in a week, and to write as well with one hand as the other in less than a year.

JURU.—The Episcopalian Church has the greatest number of members among the English-speaking population throughout the world. They number 28,500,000. The next in numbers are the Methodists, 18,500,000; the next, Roman Catholics, 15,250,000; then Presbyterians of all descriptions, 11,175,000.

BEST BEZ.—One quart of new milk, two fresh eggs, quarter of a pound of loaf sugar, broken small, half an ounce of prepared gelatine. Before putting in the gelatine, stir the mixture over the fire till it nearly boils. Take it off the fire, strain, add the gelatine, and stir till it melts, flavour with a few drops of vanilla, and colour, if you wish, with cochineal; then freeze.

A. M.—Pick off the stems and tops of small, rough, red gooseberries, and put, say, six pounds in a preserving pan, stirring and brushing them as they wash. Let them boil for 10 minutes; then add four pounds of sugar. Let all boil together for an hour, or till a little of the syrup jellies when put on a plate; remove the scum as it rises. Put it in pots, leave it till cool, then tie down with a bladder.

DUNCE.—It has lately been calculated that at least sixty per cent. of the earthquakes recorded all the world over have occurred during the six colder months of the year. In the Mediterranean and many other districts the proportion during the cold weather is even greater. January and February seem to be the two months in which mother earth especially delights in shaking up her children.

DOVE.—White sealing-wax means a proposal of marriage; black, a death; violet, condolences; invitations to dinner are sealed with chocolate colour; vermilion is used for business letters; ruby colour by fortune lovers; green means hope; brown, melancholy (derived possibly from brown study); blue, constancy; yellow, jealousy; pale green conveys a reproach; pink is used by young ladies; and gray between friends.

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ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

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London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by G. F. CORNFORD; and printed by WOODFALL and KINDER, 70 to 76, Long Acre, W.C.

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